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PICTURES

OF LIFE IN

MEXICO.

by R. H. Mason.

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With Illustrations by the Author.

VOL. I.

LONDON
SMITH ELDER & CO. 65 CORNHILL.
1851.

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TO

S. C. HALL, Esq., F.S.A.,

This Work

IS DEDICATED:

A TRIBUTE OF THE AUTHOR'S HIGH ESTEEM AND ADMIRATION.

PREFACE.

THE Author visited Mexico in 1848-9, and was in a position to gather a variety of facts relating to the people and country, in different departments, which he believes have not been hitherto published. Whatever may be their value, the reader may rely upon the information contained in these volumes being the result of personal observation and diligent inquiry, with great care bestowed to make it as accurate as possible.

The scenes or "Pictures of Life in Mexico" have been interspersed with characteristic stories and anecdotes, with a view of presenting the habits and manners of the people more vividly than any mere description could have done. These narratives are not only founded on fact, but have, for the most part, really occurred in the Author's experiences; and he has endeavoured to imitate the style in which they would be related by Mexicans. For

the information given, he alone is accountable; no contemporary statements having been referred to: except those relating to statistics, which are compiled from the best and most recent authorities, and are added to make the work more complete.

In order to form an idea of the whole country, the Author visited wild and remote districts, as well as populous cities, for the purpose of observing life of many shades and colours; and the following pages embrace scenes in the capital and in obscure hamlets, in prairies and mountains, and in habitations—not only of the wealthy and prosperous—but also in Indian huts: in short, to picture life and character among priests and léperos, hunters and miners, farmers and Indians, carriers and city authorities, has been the aim of the Author.

Should these pages have the good fortune to amuse the English reader by exhibiting life and manners so different from those of his own country, and to awaken some interest in the condition of Mexico—and thus tend towards its amelioration—the object of the Author will have been fully gained.

Albert Villa, Harrow,
December 1, 1851.

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IN

MEXICO.

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Aspect of the country.—Its different temperature and atmosphere.—Principal cities.—Plan of houses.—State of society.—Power of the priests.—Middle and lower classes of people.—Upper classes.—Costumes.—Mineral and vegetable productions.—Scenery of Vera Cruz.—Route to Xalapa.—Town and suburbs.—Gorgeous scene.—Puebla.

THE country of Mexico, generally, presents a very striking and peculiar aspect to a visitor from Europe. Its abrupt changes of climate and uneven volcanic structure, its rich natural productions and splendid scenery, together with the picturesque appearance of a portion of its inhabitants, and the wild looks of the remainder, arrest the attention most forcibly; while the degraded condition of its whole popu-

lation supplies abundant food for thought to the intelligent and humane.

Mexico is divided by nature into three portions, of different degrees of temperature,—the tierras calientes, or hot regions, principally adjoining the coast; the tierras frias, or cold regions; and the tierras templadas, or temperate regions, which include the valley and city of Mexico.

The atmosphere of the low districts, especially near the sea-ports, is exceedingly insalubrious; numerous residents annually falling victims to the prevalent fever-malaria; but the air of the elevated plains is buoyant and bracing, and so transparent that objects can be distinctly seen at the distance of many miles.

Several fine cities, containing magnificent cathedrals and spacious public buildings, adorn these states; Mexico and Puebla in the central, and Durango, Zacatecas, and Guanajuato in the northern districts, being the principal. The houses are usually built in the form of a square, round a patio, or court-yard, with offices on the ground-floor, and a large gateway for an entrance. The saloons in the upper story are invariably the most fashion-

able; the azotea or flat roof—also characteristic of good houses here—affords an open and agreeable resort after sunset. The colour of the buildings and their materials appear strange to an unaccustomed eye: inferior houses are often built with adobé bricks, made of merely sun-dried clay; and the exterior walls in some neighbourhoods are daubed besides with glaring colours—red and blue and yellow.

The state of society throughout the country is most unequal and insecure; and rebellions and warlike proclamations have been rife, in consequence.

Ignorant and overbearing native priests, of the Roman Catholic religion, exercise despotic sway. In no country is their withering influence more distinctly manifested; and under their direction, superstition assumes its most oppressive and baneful forms.

The recognised middle class of the community is so unimportant, that there is scarcely any degree between splendid luxury and squalid wretchedness; neither is there any provision whatever for the forlorn and destitute. Poor, half-clad Indians form the most numerous class of the population: living in

miserable huts built of canes, mud, and rushes, they are helpless and indolent; and there is at present little prospect of their condition improving.

Male and female léperos—creatures in rags and tatters, who bandage their limbs to counterfeit disease—block up the principal streets of the towns and cities, incessantly imploring the charity of the passing stranger. The country highways and mountain paths, and even the thoroughfares adjoining the capital, are so infested with troops of mounted ladrones (robbers), that it is unsafe to travel, unless armed to the teeth: the government mails and public vehicles are frequently stopped and plundered by them.

The superior grades of the Mexican people are descended from the Spaniards who settled in the country before the revolution; the rest are half-castes and native Indians. The men are for the most part short in stature, and deficient in muscular power; and their minds are as indolent and enervated as their bodies.

The women have often agreeable, though somewhat flat features, and small hands and feet; their hair either falls in long ringlets to the waist, or is gathered up into numerous

bands and plaits: they are very fond of gay petticoats and dresses, and jewellery. A cotton reboso, or mantilla (cotton being more esteemed than silk in this country), is their favourite head-dress; stockings are only to be seen on the feet of fashionable ladies. Gentlemen are usually dressed in the velvet jaceti, or jacket, adorned with silver buttons; a sombrero, or broad-brimmed hat, a sash, and slashed pantaloons—with a cloak, or serapé, thrown gracefully over the shoulders. The humbler ranks, however, are seldom possessed of more than a ragged shirt and breeches and a coarse blanket; or, failing these, of a long cloak made of twisted rushes or water-flags.

The silver mines in the northern regions are numerous and productive; and princely fortunes have occasionally been derived from working them. The laws for the regulation of mines are, upon the whole, wise and equitable; encouragement being given by government to private companies. Gold, copper, and other precious metals and minerals have also been discovered in considerable quantities.

Mexico is tolerably free from wild beasts of a large and powerful kind; though numerous gangs of red wolves range the northern prai-

ries, and the forests and river sides abound in serpents and dangerous insects.

Few countries can compare with Mexico for the variety of its fruit, vegetable, and forest trees,—while in some districts may be seen the oaks and pines of colder regions, in others the productions of tropical climes flourish in full luxuriance. The agave, or aloe plant, here attains its full maturity, and is one of the most valuable mercantile commodities; chilé (Indian pepper), frijoles, and Indian corn are extensively cultivated; and both sugar and tobacco are grown and manufactured in great quantities. Sweet-scented shrubs and splendid flowers adorn the forest and the parterre; among the latter may be mentioned the Mexican convolvulus, the lupin, and the rose. The fruits of Europe, moreover,—the grape, peach, pear, and orange,—are only surpassed in excellence by the delicious tunas and cherimoyas, goyavas and pineapples, anonas and granaditas, more particularly belonging to the country.

But perhaps the varied and beautiful scenery of this republic, may be best understood by a brief description of the route from Vera Cruz —its great port on the Gulf of Mexico—to the capital.

The traveller is generally anxious to quit Vera Cruz as soon as possible. Its situation being low and in the range of a tropical sun, its atmosphere consequently is feverish and often deadly; the utmost care and prudence are requisite to preserve health, even for a short period. After visiting the churches and public buildings, therefore, and procuring a passport, or *carta del seguridad*, for the interior, he should arrange with an armed troop of merchants and arrieros (carriers) to travel to the valley of Mexico in their company. This kind of journeying is more secure than travelling in the public vehicles; though it is in any case necessary to be equipped with rifles, knives, and revolving pistols, in case of encountering robbers on the dangerous roads.

The first great stage, on leaving the port, is to Xalapa—the garden of the country—where the inhabitants of the coast often resort to avoid the fever prevailing in their own districts. Although the way thither lies for many miles through the estate of Santa Anna —his old hacienda being passed to the right— the scene upon the whole is of the wildest character. As the sea-coast recedes from view, the different appearances of the country

are very striking; the hills begin to rise above the tropical foliage, until the Snowy Mountains shew themselves on the horizon.

The traveller at first proceeds beside interminable looking forests of dark trees, interspersed with magnificent flowers and shrubs of gorgeous colours. A region of apparent volcanic formation—steep, barren, and irregular—is then presented; followed by districts set apart for the growth of the maguey plant, or agave, and chilé pepper. He is soon jogged and bruised in toiling up rough and broken paths by the mountain sides, where he seems, for a time, cut off entirely from the external world. Then he perceives other outspread forests of a fairer bloom than the former, the trees greener, the shrubs more fragrant, and the whole prospect more refreshing to the sight.

Descending a rocky elevation, where a dense blue mist is always floating, the effect of the sun's rays beneath is very beautiful: the line dividing the sunshine and the clouds may be clearly distinguished. On one point of the rocks, looking back as far upon the horizon as the eye can reach, the waters of the Gulf of Mexico sparkle in the brilliant light. And as Xalapa itself comes within sight, the parched

bananas entirely give way to bright, fresh palm-trees; the rank, dry vegetation is superseded by rich and dewy herbage; and the inhabitants of the district appear handsomer, better-dressed, and more intelligent.

The town of Xalapa fully realizes the most extravagant expectations. The houses are open and healthy, and built on picturesque hills amid luxuriant trees. The female inhabitants are amiable and refined; and religion and morals are held in high esteem. But the greatest attraction to an intelligent traveller is presented by the scenery. Forests stretched out like a sea of liquid amber, studded with rich bananas and shady palms, mezquite groves and cypress trees, tuna shrubs and orange bushes; beds of red and blue, purple and yellow flowers, piled in rich harmonious profusion, with tufts of hanging blossoms, beautiful alike in themselves and in their promise of golden fruit, present a ravishing sight! Scarcely less lovely are the birds of gay plumage, the parroquets and pheasants, cockatoos and humming-birds—the brilliant colours of their plumage shining in the sunlight, as they flutter among the branches. The fruits, ripe and bursting—the cherimoyas and granaditas,

anonas, grapes, and apricots, mammeis, pine-apples, and goyavas, tunas, nuts, and sapotes; all unite to form a scene seldom to be equalled, and never to be forgotten!

The road beyond this beautiful spot is so unusually elevated, that the wayfarer appears to be walking among the clouds; sombre pines, volcanic beds, wild glens, and huge rocks, skirt the route at intervals. The villages of La Hoya and Las Vigas soon come in sight; and passing the mountains of Orizaba and Tepiacualca, the great plain of Perote begins to open on the view. The way to Perote from thence lies through a district much infested by robbers; the town itself being considered the most ruffianly in Mexico.

The next resting-place is Puebla, the second city of the republic; well situated, cleanly looking, healthy, and agreeable. The mountains that surround and shut in the splendid valley of Mexico now appear in sight; and gaining the track between their summits, the more minute peculiarities of the scene arrest the eye of the traveller. Broad lakes, sparkling here and there in the distance, impart life and brightness to the prospect; while groves

of cypress and pine trees add elsewhere the charm of repose. Warm, light-coloured fields of corn and pasturage contrast vividly with extensive precipices and volcanic ridges; and chilé enclosures and bean-fields most effectively relieve the dark aspect of maguey plantations. And to crown the whole, after many dangers and narrow escapes upon the way, the magnificent city of Mexico is discovered, outspreading, like an ornate, mathematical problem, far below.

CHAPTER II.

A MESON; OR BOARDING HOTEL.

A traveller's greeting on entering the city of Mexico.—Narrow escape.—Lassoing.—Apathy of the authorities.—Suburb of San Lazaro.—A shocking sight.—"The Hotel of the Blood of Christ."—The host's welcome.—Don Concho.—A meson, or boarding-house.—A "spare room" and its contents.—A swarm of beggars.—The public room.—Dancing girls and other visitors.—The Fonda.—Mexican cookery.—Tortilla cakes.—Adventure of an Indian beggar.

ENTERING the city of Mexico by the Puerto de San Lazaro (gate of St. Lazarus), with my moso, I was startled by cries of "Stop Señor—the lasso—take care! Madre di Dios! he is upon you." "The lasso! To the left—Holy Virgin—stay!"

I had just time to wheel round the pony I was leading, when swift footsteps approached from behind, a sound as of rustling whipcord rushed past my ear, something appeared to hover for an instant over my right hand, and a wild and crouching figure on horseback thun-

dered by me, with the curse of disappointed villany upon his lips.

"There is another on our track!" exclaimed my attendant. "The plundering rascals! But no — blessed Mother! — now he turns away, discouraged by the ill success of his companion."

We had, indeed, narrowly escaped being corded like a couple of packages, thrown down, and robbed on the highway; for this second ruffian had doubtless intended to secure my fellow-traveller, had his comrade succeeded in rifling my person and saddle-bags.

This system of lassoing in the public streets of the capital is still pursued; although the authorities pretend to prohibit riding on horseback at night, that the practice may be suppressed, and endeavour to persuade people that mounted videttes are posted at the corners of the streets for the same purpose. The crime and negligence continually lying at their doors are woful: yet they have the assurance to give out that every precaution is taken to prevent the depredations of both ladrones and léperos. But the governors of Mexico are ridden by the priests: it is not to be expected that either watchmen or officers will do their

duty unless they are regularly paid; nor that the authorities can pay them, when they are themselves so frequently in hot water; indeed, they cannot be in any other position, while almost all the wealth in the country is locked up either in the cathedrals, or the strong-boxes of the priests.

Our adventure was in perfect accordance with the miserable locality through which we now proceeded, and with the groups of wretched objects we ever and anon passed by. The streets were filthy and ill-conditioned in the extreme: even in the uncertain light of evening, I could perceive that the water in the kennels along the middle of the roads was putrid. The bye-courts were pent up and unhealthy; and the houses in some places were almost gorged by the heaps of rubbish before them.

The people were mere walking bundles of dirty rags—with oblique eyes, distorted limbs, bound-up heads, and offensive sores. They appeared to be of mixed descent, and of different shades of colour; but all looked sickly or ill-formed, and had a malignant or passionate look and reckless air. This is the worst quarter of the town; and well, for several

reasons, does it deserve its title of the suburb of St. Lazarus.

Presently we passed something lying on the ground in the shadow of a court-yard, with a large-sized sombrero slouched upon its face. It seemed awfully motionless as I stooped down to gaze upon it; the limbs were rigid, the hands clenched, and blood was flowing on the earth beside it,—yet it attracted little or no attention from the residents and passers-by. It was the body of a murdered man who had just perished in a gaming quarrel; and it would be removed, most likely in company with one or two victims from other quarters, to the Morgue, before morning.

The streets gradually improved in appearance as we advanced; and as our jaded limbs, as well as the faltering steps of our animals, attested our need of rest, I looked wistfully round for some friendly and cleanly Meson, or boarding-inn, where we could take up our abode for the night: not without a melancholy foreboding, however, recollecting the detestable accommodations I had shared at innumerable places on my journey.

"But the 'Hotel of the Blood of Christ!'" thought I, interpreting a pompous and

characteristically Mexican title overhead; "surely this must possess appliances and means of comfort better than ordinary: it would be sacrilege, indeed, to bestow such a name upon the accustomed filthy huts of mud and adobé. "Ease the ponies," I exclaimed; "call the host, and inquire what entertainment he can muster on so short a notice."

The door of the court-yard for some time only echoed to our knocks and vociferations for "Don Concho"; till at length a withered hand bearing a light, with a shrivelled forehead, sunken eyes, and nose and chin to match, emerged from an upper window: and the voice belonging to the nose and chin was heard to mutter its belief that "we must be either ladrones or sneaking zopilotes," and that we had, most likely, a design upon him.

As there are not many inns for travellers in Mexico (I do not include gaming-houses in the number, for their name is Legion), the landlord is well aware that a stranger cannot be very fastidious in his selection. Presuming upon this, he is generally a petty tyrant, and treats a casual guest exactly as he would a dependant on his bounty; indeed, such he considers him for the time being. "Don Concho"

was one of the most irritable of his class: only give him an idea that you do not consider the city of Mexico the wonder of the world, and his the best establishment of the kind in it,—or that you do not think he conducts it in the most perfect manner,—and out you must budge, bag and baggage; with the most abusive epithets imaginable ringing in your ears.

Mollified by our entreaties, the door at last turned upon its hinges; and our eyes were refreshed by the sight of an avenue of sheds and rooms, beginning at the entrance, and embracing in its course a feeble attempt at a blacksmith's shop. The fonda, or eating-house of the meson, was at the extreme end of the range; sheeps' fodder lay littering in every corner; a dilapidated old coach, with two turkeys dozing beneath it, blocked up the centre; and a number of raw hides hung drying on the walls around. I courteously preferred a request for rooms and refreshments; speculating in my own mind the while, as to where they—especially the rooms—could be found.

"No hai! no hai; Nada; no hai!" "We have nothing, nothing! We have no rooms; no refreshments: we cannot accommodate

you!" Such were at first the only replies. Neither surprised nor despairing, however, I had recourse to an infallible remedy in the shape of a peso (dollar), with which I offered to satisfy mine host for his trouble. The sight of the coin elicited an avaricious twinkle from the faded eyes of Don Concho; and after a moment's pondering, and such a minute questioning as reminded me of the custom-house, he bade my moso take the ponies to an outbuilding, and prepared to submit his only spare apartment, as he said, to my scrutiny.

Numbers seven, eight, nine, and ten,—number one began, I supposed, at the sheds outside. Two rooms belonged to a holy "padre," who only occupied them occasionally; another was hired by a very respectable old gentleman, known as the "alcalde;" a third led to the *entresol*, or portion occupied by the domestics; and a fourth was the entrance to his own.

At length we stopped before the door which opened upon his "spare room;" which, unlike the others, was upon the ground-floor, and almost adjoining an entrance to the court-yard. Such a room! Yet, for a similar tenement, a traveller in Mexico has often to be

grateful: and "it's nothing, when you are used to it."

The apartment was low and confined, being not quite seven feet high, by about eleven square; and the wonder was, how it had been made to contain such an immense variety of miscellaneous articles. The floor was of earth, with here and there a patch of mud; and the first thing that attracted my attention was a full grown mule lying on a heap of straw at one end, with his legs stretched out in a very comfortable position. In one corner stood a decayed maguey plant (aloe) of large size; while broken pots, bones, charcoal, sticks, and hoofs, lay scattered about in confusion. On one side was a miserable sleeping-cot with a rope bottom; and on the other a rough table, with a pan of exceedingly dusty frijoles (beans) in the middle.

The walls were almost covered with vermin, and hung with tawdry ornaments: the central picture—a commanding one in point of size—had evidently been perpetrated with an intent to represent the Virgin, or Holy Mother of Guadaloupe, the patron saint of Mexico; and this figure, in common with some half-dozen other saints, all in Mexican costume,

was surrounded by a halo of faded gilded rays.

In a niche stood a clumsy cross, with stony drops of blood issuing from the limbs of the figure upon it, while a variety of articles of a different character were suspended around; among them a saddle and a halter, some sheepskins and a cuchillo (a weapon resembling a knife), a pair of enormous silver spurs, with heavy Mexican stirrups belonging to them, a ragged reboso (or scarf for the head), an old pistol, a lasso, a broken powder-flask, and several not very devotional-looking strings of beads.

The whole room had a miserable look of squalor, gloom, and mouldiness: it was a perfect lumber store, and things were huddled together in the most whimsical disorder: a pack of cards was thrust between the stone crucifix and the wall, a string of beads hung from the same nail as the cuchillo, the reboso had fallen upon one of the sheepskins, the points of the spurs were piercing the eyes of the Virgin, and the lasso—suspended from one of the picture-frames—hung like a halter on the neck of a very hairy saint, dressed in a sombrero, slashed leathern trousers, and bright blue jaceti.

The floor was black, the ceiling was black, and the walls were black; so were the fleas, the skins, and the arms; the dead aloe, the crucifix, and the pan of beans, were blackening; the cot with the sacking bottom, the saddle, and the pictures were dark with dirt; and the tarnished glory round the heads of the saints loomed out in a greenish half-light from the surrounding obscurity. In short, a coating of dirt encrusted everything.

Such was the room in which I did *not* sleep; though the landlord was greatly surprised. that any objection could be started against such quarters,—and it was not without a very stormy debate that he could be prevailed upon to grant me any other.

Beggary is a profession—by far the most universal one in the city of Mexico. I had before seen it in great force in other districts, and had heard much of its prevalence in the capital; but I certainly was not prepared for such a tumultuous exhibition of mendicity as I beheld next morning from the window of my apartment. A good-natured and remarkably shy-looking old gentleman, with a short white beard and a much lighter complexion than ordinary, was attempting to cross the court-

yard; and, much to his discomfiture, was besieged by a swarm of léperos of both sexes, of all ages, and of various hues; each endeavouring to excite his compassion by the loudest outcries, and the most touching adjurations.

Such an awful din of confused noises I never heard before. A volley of bitter curses burst from the impatient crowd behind; while a chorus of blessings was vociferated by those in front, who had been relieved. Sufferers, real and counterfeit, blind, halt, and maimed, joined in calling upon all the saints to aid their petitions; and the most holy names and the most holy things, were bandied about on their filthy tongues. The landlord seeing it necessary to sally forth to the rescue, his guest was dragged in doors, and some of the most obstreperous vagrants were hustled out of the yard—only, however, to increase in a tenfold degree the dire confusion that prevailed before.

The public room of the meson was an apartment on the ground-floor of considerable size, with a profusion of wooden beams about it; very sparely furnished with comforts, though profusely embellished with bad prints, images, and papers reminding one of the indulgences sometimes to be seen advertised on

the church doors in Catholic cities. In the wooden-work, about the walls, on the doors of the cupboards, and in the divisions of the floor, there seemed to be a grotesque attempt at trellis work; and even the legs of the table and the dust under foot, to my fancy, evinced a predilection for the same appearance.

This room was often thronged with persons who came to witness the dancing exhibitions of Indian girls; and these performances, with the quarrels constantly arising from gaming, seemed to be the principal sources of interest and amusement. The manners and appearance of these dancing girls were often coarse and obtrusive, their movements so boisterous, and their attitudes so disgusting, that the less said about them the better.

Indians and Mestizoes were the most frequent visitors. The former would, perhaps, bring in a hot tortilla cake and a plate of frijoles from the fonda, and call for a cup of pulque,—the fermented juice of the maguey plant, almost universally drunk in Mexico; sometimes a Mestizo, or half-caste, would drink with him, and they would play at dice or cards together, very sociably, for a quarter of an hour or so; by which time, most likely, they

would be at daggers' points. Occasionally, too, a customer of a better class would present himself, boasting of a purer flow of Spanish blood in his veins, and wearing an embroidered jacket and red sash, who would play at monte, and solemnly smoke his cigarillo, imbibing strong spirit, also distilled from the juice of the maguey—called aguardiente.

The fonda, or eating-room and kitchen in one, at the end of the court-yard, was resorted to for meals, both by boarders and casual visitors; and its appearance was almost enough of itself to allay the appetite of a stranger. Fancy a hot, steaming room fitted up with charcoal furnaces, some in use and some in disuse, but all equally sooty; over which, either on griddles or in pans, the cooking was accomplished. Sometimes a mess of stewed mutton would be "on," at others, a thrice-cooked turkey; pans of beans were in universal request; and occasionally the tortilla cakes would be devoured with only a "helping" of the odious chilé, or red pepper boiled in lard, to accompany them.

Pepper was, indeed, by far the most predominant ingredient of every dish, excepting the equally abominable mixtures of garlic, onions,

and grease: whether it were mutton or turkey, beans or lard, soup, lettuce, or atole (a thin drink made from Indian meal), nothing could be done without pepper. It was almost impossible to partake of the mildest and most innocent compound without a strong reminiscence of pepper: green pepper was served up as a salad; red pepper in everything; pepper everywhere—and soot.

The tortilla cakes must not be forgotten; as among the masses in Mexico they supply the place of bread. These, of course, were constantly being made at the fonda. They are composed of Indian corn, which is first boiled in water with a small quantity of lime to soften it, that the skin may be peeled off; it is next ground on a smooth stone, called metate, with a stone roller; then mixed into a paste, with a due (or rather an undue) proportion of chilé; laid and made into shape on a thin sheet of iron named comal, and placed on the fire. The thinness of the tortilla is the grand desideratum; it is baked in about three minutes: and should be eaten while hot.

Very frequently a customer on entering would seat himself on the floor, and taking a plate of lard, pepper, and beans upon his knees,

would despatch his repast without knife, fork, or spoon; using a piece of tortilla doubled between his fingers instead. The hue of the cooks, male and female, of the waiters in attendance, the platters, the viands, and the table-cloth—when there was one—were all in keeping with the sooty walls.

"Pardon me, Señor," exclaimed my attendant, laughing, as he once entered my apartment, "but there has been a very strange scene in the fonda to-night! A poor Indian, the picture of starvation, with hollow cheeks, skinny arms, and eyes almost starting from their sockets, came to the door, and with hands uplifted, implored us in this manner:—

"'For the love of God! Señores—for the sake of the blessed Virgin! as you hope never to come to my state yourselves—pity me and relieve me! Is there not a morsel of tortilla? nor the least portion of chilé? Not a scrap of dried flesh? nor a cup of cold stew for a poor Indian? For the love of the blessed Virgin, relieve a starving Indian!'

"Now, as it happened, there was no one in the fonda at the moment but a poor arriero (a common carrier), the cooks, the waiter, myself, and Perata—the priest's servant, who resides

at the upper end of the street. This last—a malicious fellow—had a huge platter of stewed mutton before him which he was eyeing greedily; and perceiving that José, the head cook, was about to throw a bit of tortilla towards the Indian, he waved his hand between them, shouting,—

"'How is it that a thief like you dare to show his face within the fonda? As to your being hungry—pah! I don't believe a word of it.'

"'I am starving. Ah! Señores, pity me! I have not tasted food for three days space! I would thrust my hand into the blazing fire for a tortilla cake!'

"'Oh! you lying dog!' replied Perata, 'you would thrust your hand into the fire, would you? Look ye, Señor Starvation, let me see you place your hand in the flame beneath that furnace, and I will give you the delicious meal here before me. But if not, vanish: take yourself away quickly; do you hear?'

"The Indian advanced to the charcoal fire, stooped down, placed his hand over the flame, and uttered a loud scream of pain. 'Now,' he said, 'my supper is fairly earned.'

"'Not fair! not fair!' shouted Perata, who never meant to make good his offer. 'He did not touch the fire: I must see it fairly done.'

"Again the poor fellow stooped before the stove; and all eyes were turned upon him searchingly. He thrust his hand into the flame, and held it there for a moment: the pain seemed to produce a faintness; and with deep groans of agony he fell helplessly to the ground.

"We all, excepting Perata, repented that the frolic had been carried so far, and gathered about him in concern. Raising himself upon one elbow after a short time, he motioned us aside that he might have more air; we drew off a little from him, and in a moment he started to his feet, rushed round the table, to the place where the yet untasted platter of stew was standing with two tortilla cakes beside it, seized greedily upon them all, and darted swiftly in the direction of the door.

"One of the cooks hastily snatched up an iron ladle, and hurled it after the crafty delinquent, upsetting the priest's servant in the act, as well as a dish of boiling chilé on the top of

the furnace; and there lay Perata struggling and screeching on the ground, with the scalding-hot mixture pouring down over his head and neck.

"'Santisima Virgen! yo ho! Santisima Virgen!' yelled the scalded wretch, as he placed his hands upon the parts affected.

"'Santisima Virgen!' exclaimed the cook, as the ladle, missing its aim, shattered to pieces the only entire pane of glass of which the fonda had been able to boast for many a day.

"'Santisima Virgen!' cried the waiter, as he saw the viands vanish, and the fragments flying about.

"'Santisima Virgen!' echoed the Indian, with a grin of triumph; pausing for a moment at the door, before decamping with his strangely-gotten repast.

"And so, Señor, that Perata came in for the worst part of the adventure, after all."

CHAPTER III.

A VISIT TO THE MONTE PIO.

Public buildings of the Capital.—The Mineria, or school of mines.—Academy of Fine Arts.—Palace of the President.—The Plaza Mayor.—Visit to the Monte Pio.—Articles in Pawn.—Motley groups.—A young cavalier and a stately dame.—"Bringing out" a daughter.—A miscellaneous lot.—A daughter's sacrifice.—A needy tradesman.—Apprehension of a robber.

HALF a century ago, the city of Mexico was adorned with many magnificent buildings, occupying prominent positions in the more spacious squares and streets. The man of science, the artist, and the manufacturer, had each an elegant public building, whither they could resort at pleasure; to the erection of which either they or their forefathers had largely contributed, and upon which they gazed with pride and interest. But now the glory has departed from these structures: they are generally either diverted from their original designs, or disused and left to decay; and the descendants of their founders may wander

through the deserted rooms and dismantled galleries, musing on the days that are gone by, and on their dreary prospects of the future.

Of all the stately edifices which once graced the city—and they are noble even in their decay—scarcely any have retained their endowments, except the establishments belonging to the priesthood: these are still wealthy and luxurious; and perhaps the very decline of some far more deserving institutions, may have promoted their prosperity and splendour.

The Mineria, or school of mines, is one of the very finest buildings in all Mexico, and would not disgrace the best squares either of London or Paris. It was designed by Tolsa — a Spanish sculptor and architect — and erected under his superintendence, at a cost equal to one hundred and thirty thousand pounds, English money; which sum was contributed by the wealthiest persons in Mexico. It is built with a very clear kind of freestone, and is of great extent; containing numerous magnificent saloons and upper chambers, besides courts, galleries, staircases, and commodious ante-rooms.

The enthusiastic anticipations of its pro-

jectors for its success and support, however, were falsified by the result. The collection of minerals and curiosities is utterly despicable; the scientific apparatus very inefficient; its income barely covers a small portion of its limited expenditure; the pupils are few and inattentive; and the masters, how great soever their capabilities, can only gaze through the windows of the useless chambers, lamenting their lot, and almost envying the superior fate of the common carriers in the streets.

The Academy of Fine Arts, so often and so deservedly praised, has also become nearly unoccupied. Furnished at great cost, under the old Spanish government, and supplied with excellent casts from the finest specimens of statuary in Europe, it was, indeed, an academy of art—for a time; and appeared likely to sail down the stream of popular approval and encouragement with the full tide of success. But the sanguine hopes of its founders, and the earnest efforts of their successors for its prosperity, have alike proved unavailing: little remains to signify its present use, besides its name, and the beautiful figures that adorn its halls.

Another very fine edifice—a kind of model manufacturing establishment—founded in the north-west portion of the city during the period of the old government, has since been converted into a military store and citadel.

The Botanic Gardens, near the chamber of deputies, behind the palace, have long been utterly neglected; and the University has shared the fate of the Mineria and the Academy of Fine Arts.

The Palace of the President, on the other hand, has vastly improved in its internal appearance within the last few years. Before 1842, it was but sparely supplied with necessary articles of furniture; and deplorably deficient in either comfort or splendour. Since then, however, it has been filled with gorgeous articles of decoration: the principal saloons are furnished with gilded thrones, crimson canopies, and enormous French mirrors, with painted festoons, and decorated panels; and many of the private apartments are fitted up and embellished in excellent taste.

The Plaza Mayor of the city contains the great cathedral, several palaces, and other public edifices; some held in honour, and some in dishonour. Among the best of these

monuments was a colossal statue of King Charles IV., by Tolsa, the designer of the Mineria; it occupied a huge pedestal of Mexican marble in the centre of the square, but has now disappeared.

Part of the splendid palace—the erection of which is ascribed to Cortes—is appropriated to the purposes of the Monte Pio, or National Pawnbroking Establishment.

The Monte Pio presents too many characteristic scenes and incidents of Mexican life to be left unvisited.

The system pursued at this establishment resembles in many respects that of the Mont de Piété at Paris; and the spacious rooms, which are very numerous, are most commodiously arranged. Passing under an archway, we at once enter one of its principal and most extensive apartments.

Order is usually pretty well maintained, considering the number and qualities of the applicants; and due privacy may be observed, when required in particular cases: though, for the most part, the motley groups jostle each other in the freest manner possible. Boxes, shelves, bins, and partitions, line the sides of the apartments; attendants and clerks,

with books and pens, stand behind the counters and drawers; and bustle, eagerness, and anxiety are observable everywhere.

If we could examine some of the bundles and boxes in those private cells, we should see an abundance of splendid apparel: the richly embroidered lace mantilla of the haughty dame, and the expensively wrought serapé of the cavalier; the magnificently brocaded dress and spangled tippet, beside the bordered jaceti and slashed pantaloons of the fashionable horseman. Chased silver spurs and stirrups, massive boots, richly-adorned saddles and bridles, are huddled together in the greatest confusion. Of gold trinkets and precious stones, there is a large assortment; for the ladies of Mexico are unrivalled in the exhibition of jewellery on their persons, and they are continually either purchasing, exchanging, or pawning them:—diamond necklaces and ear-drops; magnificent stomachers and bracelets, in oriental profusion; caskets of gems, gold chains, emerald frontlets, pearl bandeaux, ruby and gold rings, costly fringes and inlayings, gilt boxes, and jewelled purses, all abound.

Arms and accoutrements are in great variety: long Toledo swords in chased sheaths

belonging to the nobles, with cuchillos and daggers deposited by léperos; silver-mounted rifles and revolving pistols, side by side with rusty barrels, damaged locks, and shattered gun-stocks, broken powder-horns and hingeless flasks. Also a fine collection of massive gold and silver plate,—gold vases, silver services, gilt trays, chased bowls, urns, and other vessels.

Of books and pictures none—with the exception of a few attractive-looking missals, some pieces of embroidery in gold frames, and a few foreign perpetrations, reminding us of the Chinese. And articles of furniture very few; for the upper classes seldom pledge their furniture, and the lower ranks have no furniture in the world to pledge.

The various groups are as opposite in appearance as can be imagined: léperos and léperas, beggars and ladrones, shoulder the fashionable and well-attired; and filthy Indians, whose earthly possessions are centred in the ragged blankets that but half conceal their nakedness, encounter the haughty and supercilious dames and caballeros at every turn.

The place of a mendicant who has just deposited a faded frezada, is taken by a remark-

ably tall, handsome young man, well-dressed, and of distinguished appearance; but who has a restless and eager look, and with feverish haste implores the officer to give him his instant attention. Addressing the clerk, who inclines his ear to him respectfully, he says,—

"I wish you to advance me twenty pesos, if you can possibly do it, upon this necklace: and may the Virgin help thee to be quick, for I have instant need of the money!"

But that individual is in no hurry to obey his commands, and he carelessly continues sorting some labelled parcels, upon which he had been previously occupied. The anxious look of this young man, and the hectic flush upon his cheek, have been produced by the excitement of the gaming-table; his temples throb, his eyes glow, and, in the extremity of his impatience, he fiercely, but inadvertently, clutches the handle of his dagger. At length the clerk in attendance condescends to comply with his demand, or at least with two-thirds of it. The usual questions are asked, the customary memorandum is made, the money is handed over, and the necklace is surrendered. It was the last dying gift of a departed and dearly beloved sister that he has

now relinquished: last night, when heated with wine, he staked his whole worldly wealth upon a cast of the dice, and lost it; and he has now sold his only remaining treasure in desperate haste, hoping to recover his losses. Soon his comrades will fleece him of this paltry sum, as they have of every other:—then death, either by the dagger or the stream, poison or bullet, will be his portion; and the consequences of his fatal sport will have to be played out through the endless years of eternity.

A stately lady in mantilla and splendid costume has just entered the room, accompanied by an attendant arrayed in a scarcely less elegant manner: she has come upon the usual errand. One of the ruling passions of a Mexican lady, is to appear in as magnificent a dress as possible at the theatre or opera, particularly on grand occasions; and the fortunes of their husbands are heavily taxed for the purchase of gold and silver ornaments, jewelled wreaths, and precious stones. This lady happens to have a daughter who has just attained her fourteenth year—a mature age in this country, which entitles her to the privilege of being "brought out" splendidly in fashionable circles —and the managing mama has resolved that

no expense shall be spared in this instance. The day after to-morrow closes with the grand opera night—a fine opportunity for display, conquest, and rivalry; but, unfortunately, the family jewels are in pledge! A few necessary articles, however, have been sold, a little money has been borrowed, and the haughty dame and her confidential companion, are come here to release the desired articles from durance vile, for a few evenings.

The business transaction is entrusted to the attendant, who makes the proper inquiries, replies to the questions put, and deposits the required amount of interest money. The lady is evidently here only for the purpose of examining the jewels, and assuring herself of their safety. Casket after casket, pins and studs, necklace and clasp, chain and bracelet, are diligently inspected; rings, ear-drops, jewelled comb, and studded zone, are once more carefully examined. The lady and her family are sure of a dazzling and entrancing display; and the mother's breast will expand with gratified pride, for her daughter will be one of the most resplendent stars of the fashionable hemisphere. Such glorification, however, is destined to be shortlived; the borrowed money will

be soon demanded; difficulties will continue to increase; and the sparkling treasures will shortly find their way to the well-lined safety chests of the Monte Pio.

A sanguinary-looking wretch, with blood-shot eyes, straggling beard, and furtive face, now presents a bundle of miscellaneous articles in very dirty condition, to the notice of the clerk, who looks at them with evident suspicion. The first thing taken up is a griddle for cooking, coated with soot and grease, then a torn but gilded missal, a pack of filthy playing-cards, a handsome pocket-pistol, a gilt chain and crucifix, a broken string of beads, an ornamented purse, much soiled, a greasy old leathern powder-flask, a bolt and two hinges, a handbasket, and lastly, three or four stone jars! Not an article among them but is stolen: they are the accumulations of a week's pilfering, at the least.

The interview with this applicant is rather protracted; for his manners and the account he gives of himself are not altogether satisfactory. The officer with the book appears to be in two minds about apprehending him for closer examination; but the fellow's impudence comes to his aid, and his story suddenly assumes an

MONTE PIO.

air of probability. In default of further evidence, it is accepted; a list is made of the articles, and about a fourth part of their value is tendered him; with which he walks away, with greater zest for plunder than ever, and a determination to avail himself largely of future opportunities.

The blushing maiden who next advances unattended, with a packet in her hand, has come upon a pious mission. Long despised at home by a dissipated father and a scornful mother, now that adversity has come upon them, she is their sole support; their ministering spirit. Her proud and noble family have given costly entertainments, frequented places of popular amusement, and rivalled the wealthiest in personal magnificence and benefactions to the Church; but a course of riotous extravagance, gaming, and debauchery, have had their usual effect, and neither the friendship of their former visitors, the sympathy of relations, nor even the blessings of the Church, are to be obtained by them now. Every external resource is exhausted. At this juncture, the fair daughter comes to their relief; she has mustered the whole of her trinkets and personal effects—many of them

valued gifts, and now offers them at the Monte Pio for the relief of her unworthy but distressed parents. The rich colour mantles upon her cheek as she exposes those cherished relics of more prosperous days; but an expression of tearful joy illumines her eyes, as she thinks of the benefit her present sacrifice will confer upon her relatives. As she turns away, one might envy her the happiness she anticipates.

A visitor of another stamp now makes his appearance—a tradesman, residing in one of the mathematically straight streets, branching from the Plaza Mayor. Of course, he is in difficulties. It is surprising how these storekeepers contrive to keep open their houses from month to month, so great is their pride and indolence, and so grossly do they mismanage their affairs:—it is no unusual thing for one of these retailers to request you to call again, if you require some article which he is too lazy to look for—and a Mexican shopkeeper seldom knows where to lay his hand upon any article required.

The individual in question has so long lived on in a kind of dream of inactivity and gentility, that he is quite electrified to find himself, on awakening, almost without the means of a

bare subsistence, and his visions of fashionable independence all melted away. Throwing down the articles he has brought, with an air of recklessness and offended dignity, he replies to the interrogations of the clerk on duty in a curt and insolent manner. He receives the amount advanced to him with an oath and a bitter smile of contempt, letting the money fall into his pocket as if it were an offering of propitiation to an offended deity; then, scowling upon the assembled multitude, he retires, muttering maledictions and vowing to revenge himself upon society in general.

Presently the hasty rush of footsteps and a roar of voices are heard approaching from the direction of the outer passage. The hubbub is caused by our friend the ladrone, who just now presented the miscellaneous bundle of stolen goods: he is surrounded by an indignant crowd, grasping his limbs, and pushing him before them, struggling and protesting, to the doorway. Encouraged by his recent success, he has been plying his vocation upon the persons of several visitors in different parts of the building, and has been taken in the act: a small box of jewels, a watch, and an embroidered sash, have been

found upon him; yet he persists in asserting his innocence. Throwing himself doggedly on the ground, he refuses to move on any terms, by turns threatening and imploring his resolute captors; but he is compelled to rise, and with a shout of execration, is dragged by main force out into the street.

He is no sooner there, however, than a sympathizing group of léperos, with a few adherents of his own "profession," make a rush to his assistance. For a moment his escape seems certain; but his guardians, among whom are a few police officers, cling to him with wonderful tenacity. A conflict ensues; blows and cuffs are exchanged; muttered curses and cries of agony are intermingled; several of the bystanders are thrown down and wounded; the vociferations increase, and the embroglio becomes general. In the confusion, the scoundrel who has occasioned it throws off the hold of his captors by a vigorous movement, and darts with incredible swiftness through an opening made for him in the crowd.

In the mean time, more police officers and a few soldiers have arrived on the scene, and a pursuit is instantly set on foot; some of the

mob join impetuously in the chase, and a sort of running fight takes place—the delinquent is once more knocked down and arrested—and the scene closes by a procession to the Accordada, consisting of the serenos (police officers), soldados, the prisoner, an attendant throng, and some léperos, who have been apprehended for the very active share they have taken during the progress of the affair.

CHAPTER IV.

GRADES OF SOCIETY.

Population. — Different classes. — Characteristics of the Mexicans. — The two dominant powers. — Mode of recruiting the army.—System of education.—Roman Catholic clergy.—Mexican women.—Pursuits of fine gentlemen.—Smugglers and Inspectors.—Aguadores, or water-carriers.—Postilions.—The Lasso.—Market people and store-keepers.—Watchmen.—Léperos and other classes of people.—Insecurity of life and property.

THE population of the Republic of Mexico may be estimated, in round numbers, at about seven millions of inhabitants, of different races; one million are supposed to be of pure European descent, upwards of four millions are native Indians, five thousand of the rest are Zamboes, or negroes, and the remainder, nearly two millions more, are Mestizoes, or people of mixed descent—allied, in a greater or less degree, both to the white and native races. Considerable uncertainty must always exist in forming an estimate of the last-mentioned portion of the population, as they are

of all imaginable shades and tints, from white to the deepest copper colour.

Social distinctions are strongly marked in this country. A few proud and luxurious priests, rich merchants, and wealthy descendants of Spaniards, chiefly constitute the upper classes; and a multitude of wretched and degraded Indians, léperos, and robbers, form the lower. In many districts, the Indians are employed by the proprietors of mines or haciendas, from whom they receive a miserable pittance in the shape of remuneration; and by whom they are almost as much enslaved as are the negroes of the United States by their owners; while in the large towns and cities, the lower ranks contrive, in their turn, to prey in every possible way upon their betters. As may be supposed, the two great classes of society have little in common with each other, except their vices; in which particular they are lamentably alike.

The practice of gaming has probably never been carried to such a height in any country as in Mexico: the best houses and hotels in their neighbourhoods are fitted up for the reception of wealthy gamblers; and the poorer sort have also their places of resort, where

play is pursued with equal avidity—varied by the indulgence of vices and debaucheries of a more disgusting and degrading character.

The most favourable specimens of the Mexican people are sensitive, proud, impulsive, talented, courteous, brave, sincere, and hospitable; but neither industrious, studious, enterprising, far-seeing, nor persevering. The inferior classes are cunning, audacious, indolent, quarrelsome, deceitful, sensual, and grossly ignorant. The Mexicans are an eminently jealous nation: they seem to think that other powers are in league against them, and are jealous of the Spaniards, of the Americans, of Europeans in general, and of each other. They are violently opposed to all manner of improvements and innovations; with the solitary exception of political changes for which they have a passion. Their hospitality, especially at their country haciendas, is remarkable: their established phrase, that their houses are at your service,—"Mi casa, señor, está muy à su disposicion,"—must not be regarded as a compliment only; it really means a hearty welcome, which the visitor is sure to receive.

The two great powers of the nation are the

army and the priesthood. They may be distinguished as the upper and lower currents—the apparently prevailing, and the secretly influential elements—of public opinion.

The manner of recruiting the army resembles the mode in which the English navy was manned in time of war, by means of press-gangs. A well-armed party is sent forth into remote and wilderness places, for the purpose of securing and bringing home any men they may be able to catch. These unfortunates—for the most part ragged Indians—are without more ado chained together, and when a sufficient number has been captured are driven like beasts to the barracks of the capital, there to be dressed in linen-cloth uniforms, and drilled by marching them through the streets. In seasons of difficulty and urgency, also, a selection is made from those well-stored reservoirs of desperate humanity—the public prisons. The recruits are usually armed with rifles, far more dangerous to themselves than to anybody else; and sometimes placed under the command of an officer of congenial spirit—a liberated felon like themselves.

The numbers of the army are constantly over-estimated; this, indeed, is a kind of

national fiction, upon which all parties are content to wink. The pay of both officers and troops is extremely uncertain; but the men are the greatest sufferers in this particular; certain practices being resorted to by their superiors that are not at all available with them. Among other ingenious devices, it is by no means uncommon for officers to insert the names of a number of fictitious soldiers in their muster-rolls, for the purpose of eking out their own precarious pay by the aid of false accounts; their remuneration being regulated by the number of their troops.

Until within the last few years, education was wofully neglected in Mexico: it was estimated that not more than one in every fourteen of the inhabitants was able to read. But at the present time, besides the government normal school for the elementary education of soldiers in the army, there are establishments for the tuition of both boys and girls, in many of the parishes throughout the country. These schools are inspected and supported under the direction of the Ayuntamientos, or town-councils: the children are furnished with books, without charge, and they are instructed in the most essential requirements of educa-

tion; including a kind of political and religious catechism—the girls being initiated into the mysteries of plain needle-work in addition. Subscription Lancasterian associations have also been formed in various parts of the republic, which have met with considerable patronage from private individuals: in these institutions, the children are instructed gratis. There are also evening-schools for adults.

There are four collegiate establishments in the capital; and a few in different provincial departments besides. It is a lamentable fact that such praiseworthy efforts as these have been, as yet, unproductive of good fruit; but many of these institutions being based on right foundations, there is promise in them. We would charitably hope that the illiterate and apathetic priesthood throughout the country, are not in their hearts opposed to the progress of national education; but their actions do not afford ground upon which to rest so liberal a construction of their conduct.

The Roman Catholic clergy in Mexico have been, for ages, in the habit of carrying it with a wondrously high hand; and, although their voices may not be quite so emphatic as formerly, they yet act without the least control. The

consequence, as may be supposed, is, that their zest for physical enjoyment and ecclesiastical domination is indulged without restraint: they pamper alike their pride and power, their love of ease and luxury. It is a rare thing—so rare, indeed, as to have given rise to a proverb —to hear of a priest, a bishop, or even an archbishop, throughout the country, who is either moral in his conduct, upright in his dealings, amiable in disposition, or pious in spirit.

In many parts of Mexico the women are celebrated for their beauty; but this quality is unusually transient here, as girls become wives and mothers at an exceedingly early age. The female character is energetic as well as excitable; it frequently happens, in remote districts, that the women are acquainted with the use of arms, and are quite prepared to defend their households in cases of emergency, during the absence of their husbands.

The life of a fashionable Mexican lady appears to be pretty equally divided between attendance at mass in the morning, for which she dresses with the utmost elegance and elaboration; gossiping and driving out at mid-day, through the Alamedas, or great

public walks; and exhibiting, with the utmost splendour and coquetry, at the theatre or opera, in the evening.

In some portions of the country, the women do not take their meals in the same apartment as the rest of the household; except on particular occasions, as a mark of especial favour. It is the practice, when at table, to abstain from any kind of beverage until the conclusion of the meal; and if any guest partake of the contents of the cup that is placed beside him, it is regarded by his entertainer as a token of his having finished his repast.

The objects which seem to engage the time and attention of a Mexican fine gentleman in a particular degree are, first and foremost, the gaming-table; training, exchanging, and ministering to the comfort of horses; and attending upon the ladies at the theatre; these occupations being occasionally varied by a visit to the cock-pit, the passeo, or the bull-ring.

The bands of smugglers on the Mexican coasts are both numerous and intrepid; and there is every inducement and facility for defrauding the revenue. The government collectors and inspectors are few and wholly inefficient, their number being utterly inade-

quate to survey a tithe of the scenes of operations; they are, moreover, so dishonest in principle, and so negligent in the discharge of their duty, that it is very doubtful if any benefit would accrue to the State from their exertions, were the members of the corps to be multiplied tenfold. A few partial and feeble attempts have been made to check the progress of the illicit proceedings of contrabandists; but their suppression, or even a check to their continuance, appears to become still more improbable from year to year.

The aguadores, or water-carriers, are among the most conspicuous objects in the streets. They may be constantly seen in their round jacetis, or short blankets, and torn pantaloons, driving laden asses or mules, or carrying jars of spring water, either in their hands, or on their heads, from house to house; cheerfully carolling the while, or expatiating upon the freshness and coolness of their saleable beverage.

It is usual for the postilions belonging to the best houses to be continually on the alert, and in attendance with the carriages and horses ready prepared in the court-yards at a moment's notice. Some of these posti-

lions are gay fellows; and I have often beheld them mounted upon their elegantly-caparisoned, though somewhat small-sized horses, the bridles and large strong stirrups tipped with silver, and the animals decorated with a profusion of highly-coloured and variegated saddle-cloths.

Round the head of one of these figures, is most likely tied a glowing red or blue handkerchief; surmounted by a prodigious, flapping, broad-brimmed sombrero, adorned with tufts, bands, and ribbons, of all the colours of the rainbow, with a broad red band passing completely under his chin. His round riding-jacket is of a brown or purple colour, thickly braided and ornamented both before and behind, slashed and open, to display a shirt embroidered at the sleeves and on the breast. His breeches, perhaps, are of a bright blue or green velvet, open at the sides, braided, and decked with small brass bells. Leathern leggings enwrap his lower limbs, secured with tinsel garters; and below these, shoes, armed with the superabundantly heavy and massive spurs peculiar to the country. Such is the outward appearance of a gay Mexican postilion. These men are excellent riders, and

are very vain; yet, upon the whole, they may be considered favourable specimens of the lower ranks of the community.

The Mexicans, especially the wild-cattle hunters, are almost unrivalled for their dexterity in the management of the lasso. It is exceedingly imprudent and dangerous, to be at large in almost any city of the republic after dusk, on account of the depredations of lassoing ladrones; and it would be still more so, if the dissolute habits of these wretches did not occasionally tend to make their aim less formidable and certain.

The market people with their panniered mules or asses, laden with turkeys, eggs, and wild fowl, fruits and flowers, vegetables and tortilla cakes, or carrying piles of dry goods, glass and earthenware, will be more particularly noticed hereafter; as also the storekeepers—whose habits of imperturbable coolness, unfailing loquacity, easy indolence, and modest assurance, are so constantly amusing to uninitiated foreigners.

Nightly watchmen, or serenos, as they are called, are occasionally to be heard in the most public thoroughfares, and near the principal archways in the several cities; but the

only service these gentry appear to perform, is to preface their call of the hour with a vociferous "Ave Maria Purissima." The traveller newly arrived in the country finds their hourly shouting an additional cause of sleeplessness, beside those which are so urgently presented by the mosquitoes and other vermin who may favour him with their assiduous attentions.

The léperos, with their cunning and mendicity, the plundering ladrones, the poor and uncultivated Indians, the faithful arrieros, or carriers, the speculative and industrious miners,—as also the lawyers and administradores so often employed by them; will be more fully described in succeeding pages.

A residence in Mexico is likely to impress even the most obtuse with a sense of its insecurity: both life and property, here, are but little respected by the masses of the community. The upper classes of society cannot disguise the fact of the apprehensions to be entertained of the degraded multitude; and the lower ranks—hopeless in prospect, and destitute alike of adequate employment and any inclination for it—have scarcely any inducements to the practice of honesty.

The most obtrusive and clamorous solicitations for alms encounter the resident at every step; and the objects of charity only wait for opportunity to deprive him of his property by violence. It is frequently unsafe to travel even in the suburbs of the cities; and always in the mountains without an escort: nor has the wayfarer any security against his guardians proving his plunderers at any moment. It is requisite on a journey, not only to be burdened heavily with defensive arms, but to make them as conspicuous as possible, for the purpose of intimidation; and there are as many precautions taken on admitting a friend or relative to the court-yard of a suburban mansion after dark—inspections by porters, withdrawing of chains, removing iron bars, and unfastening bolts, included —as if it were the entrance to some important outpost, in time of war.

CHAPTER V.

THE LÉPEROS.

The léperos: their character and habits.—Prayers and curses.—Quaking prairies of Attakapas.—A lépero's story.—A duel.—Murderous revenge.—The victim accused.—Pursuit of the assassin.—His fate.

Of all the despicable classes in Mexico, none are more calculated to excite disgust and abhorrence in the mind of a stranger, than the tribes of vagrants of both sexes called léperos. In appearance, filthy and villanous in the extreme, they are at once beggars, gamblers, and thieves: to describe a lépero as being but one of these, would be doing him an injustice, for he exhibits by turns the peculiar characteristics of each; and the suddenness with which he can glide from one character to another is surprising.

Let us glance at a few specimens of the class. That man who now trips along the pathway so hastily, began to crave charity at an early hour this morning; he has been

gambling and begging by turns all day, and when it is too late in the evening to beg, he will begin to steal. But half an hour ago you might have seen him standing in an imploring attitude in the street, bitterly complaining of a diseased body and an empty stomach—now see how jauntily and impudently he enters yonder apartment, and what a cunning leer is on his face, as he stakes his ill-gotten gains on the table, among a score or two of wretches as vile as himself.

Soon, most likely, the place will resound with sounds and cries, knives will flash and thrusts be exchanged; for the léperos are generally fierce and quarrelsome among themselves, and disturbances, arising from their ferocious outbreaks and desperate fights, are of frequent occurrence. It appears surprising that they should be thus tolerated; but as society is at present constituted in the Mexican capital, no one carries himself with a more defiant air, or wears a more impudent look (when not soliciting alms), than the vagrant lépero.

Mark yonder wretch with cringing figure and malignant aspect, whose bandaged limb seems to shrink beneath his weight, as, groan-

ing with anguish, he holds out his old sombrero for your charitable donation. "For the love of the holy Virgin," he beseeches you, "take pity upon me! By the groans and wounds of a dying Saviour, have compassion upon my agonies! By your hopes of heavenly bliss, commiserate my woes! Have you a mother? By that mother's love, and for the sake of our Holy Mother above, regard me with pity! Have you a wife? By your dear remembrances of her, relieve my misery! Have you children? For their sakes, and for that of the Blessed Infant himself, hear me, and bestow your charity! And I will pray that all the blessings both on earth and in heaven may be your portion for ever!"

You pass on without proffering the anticipated alms; the fellow's brow lowers, and his face darkens as he turns away: from entreating he turns to cursing. "May all the fiends of the bottomless pit seize upon you! May the sting of serpents and the poison of adders blight you utterly! May all the saints above curse you evermore! May every comfort fly from your embrace! May Heaven always be shut against you! May your wife and children be torn from your arms, and perish miserably

before your eyes! May your flesh rot and wither upon your bones from day to day! May you die in pain and horror, amid curses and blasphemy! And may your remains lie unburied for ever and ever!" Thus the hardened caitiff deals out his entreaties and his threats, his prayers and maledictions; and well it is for you that he has you not at his mercy.

The life of a female of this class is miserable and degraded in the extreme; they are accustomed to brawls and warfare, and in the habit of carrying concealed cuchillos with them as matters of course.

Debased as the léperos usually are, however, they are not all equally depraved; there may occasionally be found one somewhat less vile than the mass. Devoid of enlightenment and cultivation, they have sunk almost to the level of the brutes; but when some redeeming points thus present themselves, they appear all the more pitiable from the contrast.

A friend of mine encountered one at Attakapas, who was employed as herdsman on one of the prairies there, where cattle are bred and pastured. Driven to this region by a singular train of circumstances, he was living more

peacefully and honestly, and in consequence more happily, than had been his habit heretofore. "In appearance," said my friend, "he was above the average height of the Mexicans of his class; his frame was more muscular; his countenance less repulsive; and although his narrative was a wild and dreadful one, his manner as he delivered it, often betrayed the existence of a heart by no means reckless or unfeeling.

"Perhaps you may be aware that the prairies of Attakapas are neither more nor less than tracts of land formed in the course of ages, by trees which have either fallen or floated upon lakes — since deserted by the rivers of which they once were portions. These deposits have in time formed a compact surface, and present the appearance of portions of solid land, so that lean-tos and shantys may be built, and cattle reared, and men may reside upon them. The thinness of this coating is so remarkable, however, in some places, that a tremulous motion is given to it by the weight of a few oxen—hence their title of quaking prairies; the earth occasionally falling in, especially round the outskirts, and small holes and crevices being formed, into

which the salt water from the Gulf of Mexico eventually finds its way. The lépero's narrative was to this effect:—

"'It is now nearly two years, Señor,' he said, 'since I first saw my worst enemy. It was at a low and very crowded gambling-house in the city of Mexico, much frequented by our class; and for the first night or two, by chance, I was his partner in the game. He was low in stature, but strongly built; with eyes that seemed to glow like burning wood, and which, when fortune turned against him, appeared ready to start from their sockets.

"'He was one of the most successful gamblers in Mexico—very cunning and skilful; but would yet have recourse, on occasions, to those tricks of knavery with which he was so well acquainted—so that being opposed to him a few days after, and perceiving that he had not played fairly, I exposed his practices. He denied them vociferously; and on my repeating my assertions, he became violently enraged. Words ran high, mutual defiances were given, a crowd gathered about us; he seized his knife, and made a ferocious thrust at my breast—but I avoided the blow by a quick movement; and as it was perceived by the

bystanders that I was unarmed, they separated us, and we parted in bitter enmity; after arranging to meet early on the next morning to fight it out.

"'At this time, contrary to the prevailing habits of the léperos, in addition to begging and gambling, I endeavoured to obtain a subsistence by carrying goods for the merchants and store-keepers; for I had a wife and two young children, whom I loved better than I was at all aware of: as I found out when I had lost them. On this account especially, therefore, I looked forward with no pleasant feelings to my morning's encounter.

"'Although such fights were as common as the day amongst us, such was the delight many of our companions of the preceding evening found in the affair, that they were on the ground before us. They cleared something like a circle for our operations, and awaited, apparently in the highest glee, for the issue of the conflict. Throwing our ragged serapés over our left arms, we at first made but cautious flourishes and distant passes with our knives: then the play grew warmer, and I soon perceived that my adversary, though more cunning in other matters, was by no

means my equal in strength or address with the weapon; and his vindictiveness and rage gave me a still greater advantage over him. At last, losing all patience at finding himself foiled and slightly wounded, he gathered himself up for a great effort, and aimed with all his force a blow at my heart. Luckily, I received the thrust in the folds of my serapé; and, in return, succeeded in wounding him severely on the back, before he had time to recover his equilibrium. He fell; and before his friends could bind up the wound, or stay the blood which issued from it, he had fainted. The moment they prepared to carry him away, however, with his little remaining strength he fiercely leaped out of their arms, and threw himself once more upon me, foaming with rage and pain, his figure stained with streams of blood. I kept him off this time with little difficulty, and again he fainted from loss of blood. As they bore him away, I could see that, on reviving, his eyes were yet bent fixedly on mine, with a glare of deadly and implacable enmity!

"'I knew he would have his revenge—I expected it: but I was little prepared for the atrocious cruelty of his vengeance!

"'When he had recovered the effects of his wound, he suddenly disappeared from his old haunts, none knew whither: his image was fast fading from my memory, when my recollection of his enmity was once more terribly aroused. I was returning one evening rather later than common to the hut where I lived, unusually elated with my good fortune during the day: I had been successful in gaming with my comrades, it is true; but that gave me little pleasure in comparison with having at last obtained the promise of some regular employment, sufficient for the future maintenance of my family, without resorting to the means, and having to do with the company, to which I had been accustomed. "How happy shall I be," thought I, "to live honestly, and to say that my children shall be honest also. Now, I hope my degradation and misery are over, and we cannot tell what happiness may be in store for us for the future!"

"'In this buoyant frame of mind, I approached my dwelling; but was surprised on my entrance by the strange darkness and stillness which reigned around me. My first thought was that the family were overtaken by sleep while awaiting my return; but how was it,

I thought, that the rude entrance had remained partially exposed? I procured a light; and the cause quickly, and, oh! how horribly, presented itself! My wife and two infants lay in a pool of blood upon the floor,—quite dead, with their throats severed.

"'None can tell what my feelings were that night: my brain seemed on fire; the blow bewildered every faculty. I lay for hours afterwards beside the lifeless forms upon the ground; and, horrible as was the spectacle before me, I yet envied the dead their fate. As the morning dawned, however, I awoke from the torpor of grief, and rose from the earth with staggering limbs, and clothes completely saturated with blood. But I awoke also to the thirst for vengeance; and as the first rays of the sun burst into the room, I knelt down in their ruddy light, and vowed, by all that had been dear to me, to hunt out the murderer of my family, with untiring energy, wherever I could find his track.

"'But on that very day, at noon, I was hurried away by an impatient crowd, and accused before the administrador of being the murderer of my wife and children! My wild and haggard looks, my confused sentences,

and, above all, the blood upon my clothes and person, seemed alike to fix the accursed deed on me; my protestations of innocence were disregarded, my representations were disbelieved, and for months I was confined in the Accordada upon the horrible charge. At length, some traces left by the assassin of his flight were discovered; and though he had escaped, the truth gradually came to light, and I was liberated. I hastily made what preparations I could for my journey; strapped a bag for provisions upon my shoulder; paid a last visit to the grave of my wife and babes; and set out on my pursuit.

"'My enemy was cunning and contriving, and had had abundance of time to make his way to a distant region; so that my search—though constant, and animated by the spirit of revenge that possessed me—was unsuccessful; I wandered about from one part of the country to another, for a considerable period in vain. But I resolved never to give up my pursuit, and the difficulties I encountered only served to strengthen me in my purpose.

"'At length, I procured some intelligence concerning him, which led me northwards; and as I was hastening, one evening, over a wild

country, about fifty leagues from this place, I almost overtook a man on horseback, cautiously threading the way before me, who glanced around him in such a suspicious manner, that an impression immediately entered my mind that the animal on which he rôde was stolen. He turned round as I approached, and our eyes met—it was my old adversary! My appearance seemed to act like a stroke of lightning upon him: he shuddered, and almost fell to the ground; then he spurred on his horse to a furious pace, and though I urged myself to my utmost speed, he was soon far beyond my sight.

"'Oh! what rage and mortification possessed me on my disappointment! I tore my hair, I foamed at the mouth, I thought that the little reason I had left would have gone for ever. I was only upheld by the consideration that I was on his track: this kept me from despair, and restored me eventually to my usual ardour and energy in the execution of my project.

"'I travelled on for many weary stages in the same direction—not that I felt the journey difficult: I never thought of that—but my impatience begrudged every step and lengthened

every day. At last, at a short distance from this region, I was told that a man answering to his description had been seen in the capacity of vaquero upon these prairies. I suppose he fancied this distant spot would be the last in which I should expect to find him; and so it might have been, but for the information I had received. Here, then, was the end of my search! I never rested till I had seen him—myself unobserved—as he was conversing with a man whom I conjectüred was the capitaz—his employer. By a great effort, I bridled the fierce passion within me for that night, and after I had sharpened my knife, lay down in a bed of shrubs and rushes, and tried to obtain a little of that rest I so much needed; but in vain. Far from sleeping or resting, I could not remain many moments in the same posture; excitement seemed to fire my very blood, and I longed for the coming daylight, which should see me amply revenged.

"'I had not waited quite an hour after the sun rose, when I saw my foe quietly emerging from the doorway of his hut, to attend to his occupations for the day, in an opposite part of the prairie. I was soon behind him; he did

not hear my approach; and touching him lightly on the shoulder, I drew my cuchillo at the same instant. He turned quickly, and with a cry like that of a maniac, sprang from my grasp and fled. I followed, and he presently stopped short; for I think he considered the attempt to escape me utterly useless, and so prepared for a last desperate defence.

"'He was cooler at the time than I was: he was defending his life—I was thirsting for his blood. At first he had the advantage, and wounded me on my left arm, upon which I had no covering. But my strength and rage were irresistible: I bore him to the ground with all my force, and, with the vivid remembrance of my poor wife and children before my mind, I shortened the hold of my weapon to bury it in his breast. Just at this moment my arm was seized from behind, and the knife wrested from my grasp. It was the capitaz, who had beheld us from a distance, and now hastened to put an end to the affray.

"'With a single blow, however, I laid the capitaz prostrate on the ground, recovering my knife at the same instant. Meanwhile, my adversary had risen to his feet; and before I had

time to avoid his aim, he set a mark upon me which I shall carry to my grave. His triumph, nevertheless, was of short duration; for in the next close he fell undermost, and I plunged my cuchillo with all the force I could muster into his bosom;—so vehement was the thrust, that the hilt, as well as the blade, penetrated his body, and defied all my efforts to withdraw it.

"'When the capitaz regained his feet, I told him my whole history, and his indignation was almost as great as my own. He bound up the wound upon my shoulder, which was bleeding copiously; and then we proceeded to bury the corpse. We had only to pierce the thin crust of earth to a slight depth, and the water was shining beneath us. We tied some stones to the head and feet of the body of my old foe, and let it fall through the hole; where I have no doubt it soon became food for fishes.

"'My narrative now, Señor,' he said, 'is soon concluded. I could not return to the scenes of my past life: I could not bear to see the faces of my old comrades, the léperos, nor to think of dwelling in the city where my innocent wife and babes had been destroyed:

I therefore accepted the offer of the capitaz to remain in his employment, in the room of the villain so justly punished. And I trust that here, though labouring far harder and longer for my daily food than I was formerly in the habit of doing, I may yet spend the remainder of my days in honesty and peace.'"

CHAPTER VI.

DOMESTIC MATTERS.

Domestic habits.—Separation of the sexes.—Effects of national isolation and civil war.—Courtship and marriage.—Want of social meetings.—Hospitality.—Drives and visits.—Treatment of servants.—Priestly intermeddling and extortion.—Gossip and scandal.—A persecuted family.

THE domestic habits of the Mexicans, viewed in relation to the different classes of society, are decidedly coarse, selfish, and sensual. The female character is held in little respect by the greater portion of the community, and the tone of manners is repulsive and unpolished in consequence. The custom, so prevalent, of the men living and taking their meals in the better apartments, while their wives and daughters remain below, is, as well may be supposed, most detrimental to all parties: the men becoming gross among themselves, and the women sinking into a state of listless degradation. This

custom, however, principally obtains in families of the middle class—if middle class there be: it does not prevail extensively in fashionable households; neither is it seen among the poor—for the satisfactory reason, that the one filthy floor of a dirty hut, generally serves at once for husband and wife, sons and daughters, chattels and animals.

Could the Mexicans be brought into habits of intercourse with other nations, immense advantages would accrue to them in every respect. But the geographical situation of the country is against them; it is separated from the United States by a sterile and savage region, while both mountains and seas, in other directions, conspire to isolate Mexico from other lands. These unfavourable circumstances would have little effect upon more energetic minds; but the semi-Spaniards yield at once to their position: they seem to think that their best protection lies in falling back upon their own indolence, and their truest wisdom in suspecting all the world beside. As is usually the case, the national character asserts itself, more or less, in individuals and in families.

Their almost incessant civil wars and rebellions, also, have had a most withering effect

upon their progress in civilization, both national and domestic. The people of Mexico, in wrapping themselves round with jealous restrictions, and avoiding communication with other countries, have vented their spleen, from time to time, upon one another. But should a more liberal national disposition evidence itself in the country, and the light of knowledge and intelligence disperse the clouds of superstition and ignorance, those fruits of individual refinement and goodwill may be looked for, which only flourish in the genial atmosphere of domestic happiness and free institutions.

The females of Mexico are naturally kind-hearted, sociable, hospitable, and sincere; there is no deficiency of feeling amongst them, for they are eminently impulsive: indeed, to this latter quality is owing much that is excellent, as well as much that is irregular, in Mexican society.

Mexican courtships are shorter, on the average, than in most other countries; though there is no lack of passionate devotion on the part of cavalier suitors: and in high life, the vapid gallantries and sentimental affectations between the sexes in public are absolutely disgusting. The ladies lose their sway, however,

very soon after marriage; and, as a consequence, there are, I need scarcely say, many characteristic matrimonial arrangements, the details of which must not be inquired into very minutely.

There is a great deficiency of those simple and elegant social entertainments, which are so agreeable a medium of intercourse in more civilised countries. Unless a Mexican family are able to dazzle their neighbours by an extravagant display of plate and jewels, rich viands, and sumptuous decorations, they do not give parties at all; insomuch, that the unceremonious, intelligent, inexpensive réunions, so welcome elsewhere, may be sighed for in this country in vain. Genuine hospitality, of a hearty, unobtrusive kind, however, is not unfrequently to be met with—especially in the country districts; and it is seldom that the unperverted dispositions of the people are in fault in this respect.

A perfect rage for morning and mid-day drives and visits, manifests itself among the upper classes; and with many the principal part of the day is devoted to these excursions, and to the preparations they necessarily involve: great emulation and rivalry being

exhibited in equipages, dresses, and ornaments.

It is strict etiquette for a respectable family, on taking up their abode in the Mexican capital, to have cards printed announcing the fact, and representing their house as at the disposal of their friends. Until these cards are issued, visitors do not feel at liberty to call; and persons unaware of the custom, would be considered unpolite and unsociable, and treated accordingly. The following is the usual form of these apprisals:—

"Don Y. Z. (here follows the title), y su Esposa, Doña X. Y. Z——, participan á su Llegada á este Capital, y se afrecen á su disposicion, en la calle de ——, No. —."

"Don Y. Z——, and his lady, Doña X. Y. Z——, inform you of their arrival in this capital, and offer themselves to your service, in the street of ——, No. —."

The manners of the Mexican gentry to their domestics are despotically overbearing and tyrannical. The servants of both sexes are usually selected from the despised castes of society—the poorer Mestizoes, Indians, and Zamboes; and they are consequently treated almost like born or purchased slaves. Cuffs

and blows are frequently administered to them; the whip is always suspended, *in terrorem*, over their heads; and so passive are they under the yoke, that resistance, and even expostulation, is never thought of.

I have elsewhere to mention, at due length, the injurious effects of ecclesiastical confidences and espionage, in connection with the private affairs of families. This interference is so intolerably degrading and offensive, that one can scarcely allude to the system without indignation; or note, with coolness, the wily, gloating cunning perpetually lurking on the faces of its ministers. These insidious priests worm themselves into the most hidden secrets of families, holding private interviews with the wife, imposing the most imperious commands upon the daughters, warping and influencing the minds of the sons, converting servants and dependants into spies, haunting the house in the absence of the master; and, not content with feasting on the best at his expense, privately ascertain his circumstances — estimating them by his personal expenses, his wardrobe, and even the wines in his cellar— and then levy the most burdensome dues and contributions upon his income permanently.

The fondness for meddlesome gossip and scandal is unusually rife in Mexico; for the people are idle, and, therefore, very mischievous. Besides this, there is more food for scandal than could be the case in more enlightened nations, — priestly confessions and duplicity, references and intercommunications, having undermined all prudent reserve.

A story, that came to my knowledge in connection with an unfortunate and persecuted family, will serve to illustrate this habit.

One fine March morning, the good people residing in the street San Martin, of the town of Perote, were startled by the appearance of four mules, two abreast, and a group of strange figures, all advancing very quietly between the irregular rows of strong castellated little houses peculiar to the vicinity. The human portion of the procession consisted of eight persons,—a rather tall, well-looking man, the father of the family, by whose side walked the muleteer with whom he was talking; followed by a sprightly youth about seventeen, hand in hand with his sister, a blooming, handsome girl, a year younger; and a vagrant urchin not more than ten years old, very like his father, who was thwacking the

mules ever and anon with a large stick. On one of the mules sat a well-attired female—the matron of the party; two young children were perched upon another, while the remaining two were loaded with sundry articles of domestic furniture, of good quality and condition.

These persons composed the family escort of honest Kuys de Bogota; a harmless individual, who was in the habit of tracing his descent—and not without reason—to a nearly pure Spanish stock. For some cause or other (I believe he had been an unsuccessful partner in an earthenware manufactory), he had removed from the city of Puebla, where he had long resided; and had determined to take up his future abode, with his family, in the small town of Perote—there to live in as retired a manner as possible.

Kuys de Bogota was a quiet and worthy man: his disposition was easy and unassuming to a fault; for it had permitted him to be so grossly imposed upon in his late business affairs, that his quondam partner—a bustling, unscrupulous little fellow—had monopolized to himself nearly the whole of the profits; and had finally sent him adrift into the world,

without compensation of any kind. Honest Kuys and his family would thus have been in danger of suffering from actual want, were it not for a small interest in property possessed by the wife; upon which scanty provision they resolved to retire. In personal appearance the good man was comparatively fair, florid, and well-conditioned; although, since the disastrous reverse in his circumstances, he had become rather more careless than usual in the particular of dress.

The Señora, his wife, was also a very exemplary individual: she had been a dutiful helpmate to poor Kuys; atoning as far as in her lay for his deficiencies, and ever making the best of things. She had had no power, however, to prevent the final catastrophe in her husband's fortunes; and the affair had, upon the whole, the effect of disgusting her with the world, and of reconciling her to a life of seclusion with her family: but she was the gentlest of misanthropes, and much beloved by her husband and children.

Their olive branches had, as yet, given them but little occasion for uneasiness. The eldest son, Rual, was lively, good-hearted, and intelligent; and had hitherto assisted his father

in the business. Clara, the daughter, was both pretty and modest; and though she had had, at least, three tolerable "offers" of marriage already, she had not at present thought fit to accept one of them. Little Mig, or Miguel—the young scapegrace just now discovered thrashing the mules—was certainly the most rampant of the family, and had given his estimable parents some trouble. The two youngest children were merely sweet-tempered and interesting.

On their safe arrival at Perote, they selected one of the most prison-looking of the gloomy little habitations at the north end of the street; the only entrance to which was through a buttressed court-yard; and whose only ornaments were some dead plants in adobé pots and boxes, on a bench beneath one of the gable ends of the house. This residence looked so completely secluded, that, when you were once in, you would fancy you required the assistance of a gaoler to let you out again; but in this particular it harmonised with the feelings of the now stricken beings who sought its shelter.

Never was speculation more lively, nor curiosity more excited, among the gossips of

the vicinity, than on the arrival of this family. "Who were they? Where did they come from? How many of them were there? What furniture had they? What were their circumstances? What was their reason for leaving their last abode? What was the cause of their selecting such a residence as that? How old were they? Was the young man their son, or was he the daughter's husband? Had any children lived and died between the ages of the daughter and the active little boy? And—were the two youngest of the family twins or no?" Such were the inquiries and surmises industriously set afloat among the considerate neighbours; and the less able they were to satisfy themselves on these topics, the more was their curiosity whetted and excited.

Had the de Bogotas been in absolute poverty and distress, few questions and little interest would have been produced on their behalf; but as the case stood, there was something rather "respectable" and superior about them which made it all very interesting. A little tailor over the way, and a female tortilla-cake baker, who lived in his court-yard, were both thrown into a perfect fever of conjecture

by the affair; and unless something came of it soon, they appeared likely to set aside their avocations entirely in consequence.

Now this, of all others, was the time for the new-comers to ingratiate themselves with their curious fellow-townsmen. Had they been prudent people, they would have hastened to satisfy the general curiosity; and enabled each gossip to tell his or her fellow-gossip the whole truth, *and more.* *Not* being prudent people, however, they let the opportunity pass by; and very soon the current of public opinion set against them. The little tailor and tortilla-baker, as well as several other estimable tradesmen and house-dwellers, waited upon the family on numerous occasions, and were most considerate in making due inquiries; but the Bogotas—resolving to abide by their determination of living retired—evaded such kind advances, and steadily resisted all neighbourly investigations. To this obstinacy, then, was attributable all the misfortunes which afterwards saddened the existence of this fated family.

For a while, they lived on in quiet unconcern respecting their future fate; the gossips only waiting for some slight pretext to originate all

manner of malicious reports to the disadvantage of their new neighbours. An opportunity of forging the first link of a desolating chain of slander was not long wanting.

It was noticed that the family very seldom attended mass in any of the churches during the week. It is true that on the Sunday they proceeded thither quite regularly, as in duty bound—but this was not sufficient. The lady of the house, too, did not resort so frequently to the confessional as a good Catholic should; and when the priest took occasion to visit the family, he was received respectfully, but not with that warmth of adulation and reverence which on such occasions ought to be evinced. This was more especially the case when the goodman of the house was absent.

Here, then, was a discovery. The Señora Kuys de Bogota was irreligious! Whisperings of examination, and inquiries, and heresy, were immediately circulated; and it was considered that something serious ought to be done with such people, were it only for the sake of example. Disrespect in the particular named, was quite unintentional on the part of the lady and her family—but that did not matter: she was decidedly irreligious!

Honest Kuys himself was very much in the habit of wrapping himself snugly in his serapé, and taking solitary walks to brood over his past misfortunes—especially in the evening. One night he was returning from one of these rambles rather later than usual, with his sombrero drawn moodily over his eyes, and his figure encased closely in his blanket—when he was perceived, beside his own door, by the little tailor opposite. The tailor, noticing his cloudy aspect and slouched hat, took occasion to remark to the tortilla-baker, who was with him at the time, that Kuys de Bogota looked very like a ladrone. This was sufficient: the report was spread by the tortilla-baker and a select circle of friends, that their neighbour *was* a ladrone; and before noon of the following day it was universally accredited, that honest Kuys was the captain of a band of desperate ladrones then infesting the vicinity.

This, then, was a second discovery! And the worthy residents began to applaud themselves, forthwith, for their sagacity.

On another occasion, also, the daughter was observed to loiter in the public walk after sunset, leaning on the arm of a smartly-dressed cavalier, with whom she was laughing and

talking in the most unrestrained manner, and who actually lifted her mantilla in jest, and allowed it to flutter in the breeze. The benevolent beholders did not take the trouble to notice that the young cavalier with whom she was on such familiar terms, was her own brother,—that was quite beside the question. The young lady was accordingly set down at once to be an abandoned profligate!

This was a sweeter morsel than all the rest; and the neighbours really entertained hopes now, of *making something* of the family!

Young Mig, or Miguel, and his elder brother were the victims next to be sacrificed; for they had the audacity to go and meet their father, more than once, as he returned from his evening walk, and to enter their home in his ungodly company. These proceedings, of course, made them sharers in the desperate profession of their parent. Yes! they were young thieves both: it was with them, like father like sons; and there could be little doubt of their being pretty nearly as bad as he!

A well-wishing friend one day hovered round the entrance of the court-yard, to observe the two youngest children at their play. The

urchins—as such little creatures will—had built up a small mound of rubbish on the ground, and were belabouring each other vigorously therewith: at length one of them so beplastered the shoulders of the other, that he cried out loudly, as if in pain. This was enough for the well-wishing friend. He straightway informed all his acquaintances, *in confidence*, that the young children of the de Bogotas were wretchedly filthy and diseased!

Here was a state of things! The Señora de Bogota was an irreligious heretic! Kuys de Bogota himself was the captain of a band of robbers! His two sons Rual and Miguel were juvenile thieves! The young children were disgustingly filthy and diseased! And the pretty daughter Clara was an abandoned profligate!

Before many days had elapsed, two priests and an assistant, presented themselves at the door of the little dwelling in question, and demanded admittance, stating that their business was most urgent. They had not come on their usual mission of comfort to their flock, they said, when they were seated in the midst of the family up-stairs; but to acquaint them

with the manifold accusations in the mouths of everybody against them; and to inquire if Kuys de Bogota had anything to say in defence or extenuation. They then—to the horror of every member of the unsuspecting household—unfolded the charges with which the reader is acquainted, at length; subjoining a number of infamous circumstances which had been detailed to them, and which, it is scarcely necessary to add, were neighbourly fabrications. Poor Kuys, astounded at such a communication, could find no words to reply; and, amidst the tears and lamentations of his wife and children, he was ordered away—as the head of the family—in the custody of the attendant.

After much suffering, anxiety, and loss of time, it was discovered that the reports circulated to the disadvantage of these victims could not be substantiated; and Kuys de Bogota was immediately set at liberty. But his good name, and the reputation of his family, were utterly blighted; and their hearts sank within them at the recollection of the infamous treatment they had experienced. To make the best of their pitiable position, therefore, they privately procured a

passport and some mules; and at an early opportunity, removed from such an inhospitable district in the night, no one knew when and whither.

CHAPTER VII.

A TERTULIA, OR EVENING PARTY.

The streets at evening.—Mexican cries.—Grand saloon arranged for a party.—Ceremonies of salutation and introduction.—Superb costumes of the guests.—Bishop and priests.—A blonde beauty.—Mexican belles.—A vocal performance.—Music and dances.—Cards and forfeits.—Mexican carvings of the Nativity and Life of Christ.—A bishop's soliloquy—His account of the ancient worship of Mexico.—Party breaking up.

HAVING received a card of invitation to a tertulia, or evening party, to be held at the house of my friends Señor Tirenza and lady, in the "Calle de Francisco," City of Mexico, I set out on my way thither about dusk, and on foot.

Few things are considered more vulgar in Mexico than walking in the streets; carriage travelling, even for short distances, being the arbitrary rule; yet, on the evening in question, my unfashionable transit was more entertaining than it would otherwise have been. Many shops were closing, their owners standing with arms a-kimbo at the doors, smoking their never-

failing cigaratos, while their puny assistants were involved in raising quarrels with begging léperos, who everywhere haunt the stores at this hour. Street musicians, with their guitars and tambourines, were thronging from the public walks, to the posadas and pulquerias (pulque-stores); and street-vendors, with their characteristic and amusing cries, were in full force in every direction. Invitations to purchase "Gorditas! Tortillas! de horna caliente!"—"Cakes! hot cakes! fresh from the griddle!" were incessant. "Mantequilla! Lard! lard! at a rial a lump!" next exclaimed the grease-man. "Granaditas! Oh, my heart! monstrous granaditas!" shouted the fruiterer. "Ducks! hot and fresh! delightful ducks!" insinuated another itinerant; while entreaties to buy "Cigarillos," "Hot Chestnuts," "Bocadillo de coco,"—"Sweet Candy," "Frijoles and Chilé," and "Salt Mutton," seemed to fill the air, and resounded on all sides.

Arriving at the house, and being ushered into the grand saloon on the second story, the effect of the arrangements was most imposing. The apartment, which was large and lofty, and lighted by several splendid coloured lamps,

had been cleared in the middle, with the exception of some small ottomans, leaving the ornamented side-boards and richly-laden tables at one end, while sofas, chairs, and musical instruments were ranged around. Some brilliantly coloured religious pictures, and a gold crucifix, hung upon the walls; a superb musical clock of large size, with a stuffed parroquet curiously made to move in time with the clockwork, imported from Spain, was conspicuous at the east end of the room; a finely executed and elaborately painted model of the Nativity, with numerous figures, attracted considerable attention; and two pianos, evidently of European construction, stood invitingly open. The tables and side-boards were adorned with massive and finely-wrought silver-plate and glass vases, with ices and other refreshments: groups of beautiful flowers and fine fruits being placed at intervals, which, reflecting back the light from the coloured lamps, imparted a sparkling and refreshing aspect to the whole.

Mexican politeness and compliments, on visiting, introduction, and leave-taking, are proverbially ludicrous and laboured; this was a good opportunity for witnessing them. Immediately after I had paid my devoirs to my

entertainers, a gentleman in scarlet and gold uniform was announced, who, entering the room with a series of low bows, thus addressed the lady of the house :—

"Honoured madam, I feel most happy in offering myself, without novelty, to your service! I hope you are excellently well!"

"At your disposal, Colonel," was the reply, "as are also my husband and my house."

"Madam," continued the officer, "your most humble, dutiful servant!"

"Sir, I am rejoiced!"

"Madam, I have the supreme honour to kiss your feet!" (Advancing a step, and bowing without intermission.)

"Sir, I have the honour to kiss your hand!"

"Madam, I have pleasure in being your servant, and that of this honourable company."

"Colonel, we are all at your service!"

And so proceeded the ceremonies of introduction; and as other guests arrived until the company was numerous, the polite duties of the host and hostess became anything but a sinecure.

The dresses of the guests were splendid in the extreme, especially those of the ladies; much rivalry existing between different ranks

and families on the subject of jewels and apparel. One of the most superb dresses belonged to a juvenile Señorita, the only daughter of a General: it was of dark crimson velvet, embroidered with white satin flowers; the corsage ornamented with silver clasps, and the whole edged with the finest white lace; an under-petticoat, also trimmed with lace, appearing below it. She also wore a blue silk sash tied behind; a mantilla of fine blonde, studded with diamonds; diamond ear-rings, and a necklace of pearls and diamonds.

Another lady wore a dress in some degree resembling that of a peasant on holidays, which was exceedingly graceful: a satin vest, embroidered with gold, was worn open, shewing in front a fine lace chemisette; a muslin handkerchief, fringed with gold, covered the neck; and a petticoat of dark purple silk, trimmed with lace and embroidered with gold, contrasted with another petticoat beneath, of a lighter hue, adorned with coloured bows. Others appeared in black and dark-blue robes of blonde, with satin under-dresses, short sleeves, mantillas fastened with diamond brooches, pearl necklaces, and white, and pink-and-white satin shoes.

There were gentlemen *à discrétion*, for the most part dressed in embroidered jacetis and serapés, and slashed pantaloons; and often in sparkling uniforms,—military men being very popular here. My attention was particularly attracted by a rather intelligent-looking bishop from a distant province; who, attended by two deferential priests, was visiting the capital upon some mission connected with his church: I had the honour of conversing with his reverence for a short time in the course of the evening.

A young lady with light blue eyes, and fair, rosy complexion, was much noticed by the company. She was of Spanish extraction, but had resided nearly all her life in the United States: her light colour and fair hair rendered her almost a curiosity among the dark beauties around, so rarely are such persons to be seen in this country. A visitor from Europe is unlikely to appreciate the style of beauty of the Mexicans, until in a degree familiarized by time: their attractions generally consist in splendid, liquid black eyes, luxuriant dark hair, fine hands and arms, and pretty feet,—though these are often injured by being thrust into shoes far too small for them. They have neither the fresh, stately beauty of the

English ladies, nor the vivacity of the French; the refined look of the American, nor the classical beauty of the Greek. The Mexican ladies are often short and stout; their teeth discoloured, their complexions clouded, and their gait undignified;—still, beautiful exceptions to these defects are not unfrequent, and they appear particularly attractive when seated in their carriages, or at the opera.

On the present occasion, I could not help remarking that the ladies were rather overdressed, upon the whole; and, with all their splendour, deficient in that elegant simplicity which is the best accompaniment of beauty, and one of the most unfailing indications of good taste.

After fruits, ices, and wines had been handed round, all eyes, as if by common consent, were turned to the open pianos; and the Señora Quienta, known to be a good singer and musician, was requested by our hostess to favour the company. She executed several fine Italian airs with good effect, and afterwards some native Mexican songs, by particular desire. Though correct, scientific music is at a somewhat low ebb in Mexico, great fondness for the art exists; and, as in Spain,

fine voices are very common. The Señora's contralto voice appeared to much advantage in the simple Spanish ballads; and though the Mexican songs were for the most part childish and unmeaning in point of sense, their short and often-repeated cadences were sweet and pretty.

Guitar music, and songs accompanying it, next engaged the attention of the company; among which airs from the Puritani were to be distinguished. Then the pianos and guitars united to strike up a quadrille; and the varied groups arranged themselves for dancing, which was kept up with great spirit. After a short interval, they joined in a German cotillon; and subsequently a waltz. Various dances peculiar to the country, jarabes, afforrados, and enanos, were afterwards performed by the more youthful members of the party: these dances were rather monotonous, but with short steps and quick music, in a rustic fashion.

Weary of dancing, the middle-aged and elderly ladies and cavaliers at length formed themselves into parties for cards and conversation; while the younger indulged themselves with the "Juegos de prendas," or games of forfeits, of the country. Anxious to profit

in some measure by conversation, I requested an introduction to the reverend bishop and his attendants, whom I have already mentioned, —and was fortunate enough to obtain it.

He was standing in an admiring attitude, with folded hands, before the carved and painted model of the Nacimiento, or Nativity, that completely filled a large niche in one of the walls. The native Mexicans are allowed to possess wonderful aptitude in carving and modelling small figures, and this was a very creditable specimen of their skill: the numerous groups composing the several compartments being well formed and effectively placed, however injured, as they were, by ludicrous anachronisms and incongruities.

In the centre of the piece was an ornamental Temple, with ivory pillars and a dark-blue canopy, above which shone a huge, resplendent Star, manifestly attracting the attention of a band of figures advancing from a distance, with long black beards and magnificent dresses—these were the Wise Men of the East. On an ivory manger between the pillars, was laid a figure of the infant Christ, with gilt rays, and in a gold brocaded shirt; over whom the Virgin Mary—dressed in a lace mantilla,

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chemisette, and white satin shoes—was stooping fondly; while Joseph, also in gilded rays, and sombrero in hand, stood upright in the background. Curly sheep and very long haired cattle were ranged upon the straw at each extremity of the temple floor; and in the immediate foreground, five shepherds, with crooks and cups in their hands, draped quite unlike shepherds, were kneeling in various postures of devotion. This was the principal compartment of the model, and great pains had evidently been taken to render it full and complete; many of the wax figures were beautifully executed, though all had that unnaturally-new, garish appearance, generally to be observed in such productions.

The four remaining compartments—two on each side the principal—were equally characteristic. The most striking of these was a representation of the Massacre of the Children by Herod; in which the ruthless king was shewn seated on his throne, crowned, and raising a sceptre in his hand, as if directing the slaughter going on around him. Heaps of slain infants were piled up to the foot of the throne, by soldiers dressed in a fanciful admixture of drapery and armour; and women were

bewailing their cruel deprivations, in various well-conceived attitudes of woe. As companion to this scene, on the other side, was the Flight into Egypt,—the upper part of which was filled with angelic spectators of the humble procession; and surely never did such a sleek, smooth donkey exist, as the one there depicted crossing a narrow board over a stream, with the Infant Christ on his back, in a small sombrero and serapé, and Joseph and Mary on either side;—the former in a long cloak and monk's hood, and the latter with miniature diamond ear-drops and a spangled petticoat.

The other two divisions of the piece were made to describe later events connected with the same history,—the Last Supper, and Christ washing the Apostles' feet: in one, the disciples were exhibited with the height of surprise on their faces at the conduct of Judas, to whom they were pointing, and who had hastily risen from the table with an indignant, scowling countenance: in the other, Peter was vehemently rejecting the offer of his Master, while Judas, money-bag in hand, again frowned on the party from behind, with one of the most villanous and malignant visages imaginable.

After a hasty, though somewhat ceremonious greeting from the bishop, he turned to whisper to his attendants; and then allowed his gaze to wander to the model of the Nacimiento, as before. Presently, those representations appeared to excite him to conversation, and addressing me, alternately with the priests beside him, he proceeded as follows:—

"What a glorious thing, Señor, is our Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic faith! Let heretics and enemies exclaim against it as they will, yet what a saving effect has it not had on this favoured country! Human sacrifices have been abolished; horrible atrocities have been prevented; immorality in high places has been checked; and a system of degrading superstition has been suppressed! In place of offering bleeding human hearts to senseless, misshapen idols, in cannibal temples, the people are directed to the worship of the one God: the truth of our Holy Church has been unfolded as a banner, and the adoration of Christ and the Blessed Virgin has superseded that of wooden monsters and hideous reptiles!"

On my endeavouring to elicit some account of the practices connected with the worship of

the ancient Mexicans, to which he had alluded, the bishop continued thus :—

"In the ancient Aztec temples, there were many sanctuaries erected to the gods of war, with staircases and numerous altars, upon which human sacrifices were offered. The doors of these sanctuaries were often shaped in imitation of the heads of serpents and wild beasts, with mouths into which the entrails of birds, beasts, and men were continually thrust; and in the gardens set apart for the culture of holy flowers, horrible towers and mounds were formed of the skulls of human victims sacrificed.

"Thousands of priests, in divisions both for day and night, sang impure songs in honour of the idols; their hair died black, and their bodies anointed with spices and burnt flesh, and the ashes of scorpions and spiders. They had gods of Peace and War, of Earth and Air, of Fire and Water, of Corn and Flowers, of Night and of the Sun. In the hollow of the Stone of Sacrifices (which is still preserved), victims were laid, and priests, dressed in feathers of the toto, or sacred bird, held them down while the chief priests cut open their breasts, extracted their hearts, and offered

them in golden spoons to the principal idols, —the rest of their bodies being burned as incense. It is currently stated that the number of human victims, annually sacrificed in this city, amounted to between twenty and thirty thousand!

"Blessed, then," exclaimed the bishop, in conclusion—"blessed be those glorious Christians from Spain, who first abolished these barbarities; and raised the standard of the Holy Cross, and the Image of the Blessed Virgin, in this polluted and benighted land!"

I could not but freely acknowledge that the Catholic religion, inefficient and abused as it has become, is a religion of charity and mercy, compared with the one so truthfully depicted by the provincial bishop; though courtesy restrained the utterance of my regret, that the Christian spirit of love and self-sacrifice is not at present exemplified in the church of Mexico.

By this time it began to grow late: the finger of the time-piece was fast approaching the hour of one; the dancers were evidently fatigued; the card-parties had broken up; several ladies, with their partners, had departed; and it was time for the remaining

guests to follow. After partaking once more of the light wines and cooling refreshments, therefore, they dispersed, — with many lingering adieux and compliments to our excellent host and hostess. And I was glad to avail myself of the accommodation afforded by a heavy lumbering coach, with round sides and top, and protruding glass-doors and panels, on my return home.

CHAPTER VIII.

RELIGION.

Religion in Mexico.—System of Priestcraft.—Ignorance and recklessness of the people.—Immorality of the clergy.—Trafficking in crime.—Priestly extortion.—Sale of indulgences.—A rake's penitence.—A coquette at the confessional.—A tradesman's restitution.—A lépero's devotion.

THE religion of this country appears to an observer, little else than a kind of excuse for questionable and nefarious transactions — a species of set-off against continual frivolity and sin—a convenient medium through which, by paying a certain amount of money, and a due portion of outward respect to the priests, the people may pursue a course of vice and dissipation with an easy conscience.

No system of priestcraft could be better calculated than that prevailing in Mexico, to pamper arrogance and love of domination in the ecclesiastics, at the expense of the com-

munity. The many forms of oppression employed by the "padres" throughout the republic; the cunning with which they wind themselves into private affairs, whether political or domestic; and the degrading espionage maintained by them over the actions of individuals, are alike surprising and revolting, to the unprejudiced.

Ignorance and dependence are the prominent results of the system. Converse with a Mexican on the subject of religion, and he will tell you it is the priest's affair, and not his; that the Holy Father So-and-so will do all that is right for him in the particular, for the padre is acquainted with his spiritual state, and he himself is at no trouble about the matter. Mention education and learning, and he will at once assure you that those also belong of right to the priests; and that no one else should presume to interfere in such concerns. Remonstrate with him on the probable issue of a career of debauchery and excess, and he will reply that, so long as he and his confessor understand each other, nobody else has the smallest right to be offended. And thus, all responsibility is thrust upon the willing shoulders of the ecclesiastics.

Nothing could tend more effectually towards the moral deterioration, not only of the people, but of the clergy themselves: wholly uneducated, and initiated from youth into the crooked arts of intrigue, it cannot be expected that they should prove other than they are. The vices of the priests, here, are glozed over and winked at; but such manifold and glaring indications of their iniquities are so constantly evident, that no impartial mind can be unconscious of the actual tenor of their lives.

Sensuality, arrogance, tyranny, and avarice are their prevailing characteristics; and so lost are they, for the most part, to all better feelings, that they do not care to assume in private the possession of any nobler and holier qualities.

Religious offices and observances are degraded into mere matters of bargain and sale. Licences to commit crimes are paid for in dollars and rials; and the chaffering and indecorum consequent upon such transactions are disgustingly obtrusive. The extortions and intimidations practised at the bedsides of the sick and dying, and in bargains with those who have friends in purgatory, are still more nefarious. No wonder, then, that the

people have little respect for a religion taught by such men: who, however, make it a powerful instrument of terror to the timid, the weak, and the credulous. Penance and other physical terrors are threatened on fitting occasions; while the bugbears of excommunication and purgatory are held forth in all their horrors besides. The priest does not scruple to represent himself as the absolute arbiter of eternal bliss or endless punishment; and the unfortunate victim quails and falls prostrate in the ecclesiastical presence, eagerly consenting to any terms of accommodation which the unbounded stomach of the priest—conscience he has none—prompts him to propose.

By the systematic sale of indulgences, however, vice stalks abroad clothed in a mantle of impunity. The commission of an enormous crime is but a small matter, providing you possess wherewithal to bribe the church for the same: how heinous soever may be the sin, the priest will wipe it clearly away for a con-si-der-a-tion. To smooth the path of vice, indulgences are to be had ready to hand, before the crime is committed; and the indulgence once paid for, the sinner has a balance in his favour till the offence is consummated: and

then all is square again until the next occasion. Vices thus pampered, flourish and luxuriate, unrestrained of man, bribed by the church, and sanctioned—as the poor, ignorant victims are taught to believe—by the approval of God himself!

I have seen a rakish cavallero, dressed in all the extravagance of fashionable finery, hurrying thoughtlessly to the confessional, with a flushed face and an unsteady gait, fresh from the debaucheries of a life upon the town, and closet himself with a holy padre, professedly to disburden himself of his little peccadillos. The priest received him graciously, despite his half intoxicated state; for he was wealthy, and well able to discharge his running account with the church. In a little while he came forth, lighter-hearted than ever; having made some lip protestations of amendment, promising to perform a few easy penances, and offering a contribution to the church, which was thankfully accepted. Then he would plunge deeper in riot and dissipation than before; exulting in the convenience of an institution which could relieve him from all the responsibilities of his crimes, upon such moderate terms.

Soon after, perhaps, a lady, belaced, befringed, and bejewelled, whose life was a career of vanity and frivolity, would proceed to the confessional. The pious father would doubtless receive her simpered professions of repentance at least as kindly as in the former case; and soon she would return, on the most complacent terms with the world, with herself, and with the priest who had so sympathetically listened to her, and granted her absolution in full for her interesting follies and dissipations.

I have noted a tradesman issuing from his store, with the fruits of his extortion and dishonesty in his hand, to offer a commission to the priest upon a portion of his knavish dealings, on condition of being absolved from the consequences of the whole. He has afterwards rushed eagerly to the gaming-table and the spirit-shop, and compensated himself in his own way for his religious offering; qualifying himself to require new penances and mortifications for sin, at a very early opportunity.

Filthy léperos, the vilest of the vile, will often kneel down before their brass crucifixes in seemingly deep adoration; their devotion

becoming more fervent on the approach of a benevolent stranger, when presently thrusting the image into the pouch of their ragged pantaloons, they will pick the benevolent stranger's pockets, if they have an opportunity. Then they will again produce their crucifixes and address themselves to prayer, with a greater appearance of devotion than before.

Such instances might be multiplied to any extent; but these may suffice for the present. That true spirit of religion, without which all creeds are worthless and all professions vain, has scarcely a recognisable existence in the Mexican nation.

CHAPTER IX.

PRIESTLY DOINGS.

Spanish process of conversion.—Apprenticeship to religion.—Indian girl's filial piety.—The chain of indulgence.—Inquisitorial spirit in Mexico.—Wealth of the church.—Number of ecclesiastics and religious establishments.—Priestly methods of making money.—Pursuits of the priests.—Scene in the market-place.—Procession of the host.—Adoration.—Priest's visit to a sick man.—Costly Viaticum.—A bereaved family.

THE first ecclesiastics from Spain, who settled in this country, distinguished themselves by a most praiseworthy desire to convert the ignorant Indian inhabitants to their own faith. The natives, however, being warmly attached to their old superstitions, and jealous, for obvious reasons, of the new comers, the most powerful means were employed to convince them of their errors. The weak minded were terrified into submission, the credulous were enticed into belief by promises of benefits and privileges, and the refractory were treated sum-

marily as heretics: they were hunted down and persecuted, starved and tortured; blood-hounds were let loose against them; they were immured in dungeons; denied the commonest necessaries of life; the rack was brought into operation, and numbers perished in all varieties of agony. In some parts of the country, the neophytes who embraced the new faith were bound to a ten-years servitude to their ecclesiastical patrons, as a return for the privilege of becoming converts,—an original idea in the annals of proselytism,—that of serving a kind of industrial apprenticeship to the art and mystery of true Catholicism!

The old Spanish monks and priests were banished from Mexico at the revolution; but their successors, of Mexican birth, are only superior to them in unblushing profligacy, rapacity and extortion.

My attention was one day arrested by a young Indian woman, who entered the cathedral in a most supplicating guise, bringing in her hand all her worldly wealth—the poor pittance for which she had laboured for many weary months. After a long confession, and many doubts and fears, a bargain seemed to have been arranged between her and the

officiating priest, and with sobs and tears she handed over, every rial of the money to him. He then gave her his blessing and a promise in exchange, and turned upon his heel. Then a kind of trembling ecstacy appeared to seize her, and her tears fell faster; but they now seemed to be tears of joy. Clasping her hands convulsively before her, she raised her eyes to heaven, and exclaimed, "Blessed Virgin, I thank thee! I have now purchased the release of my parents from five thousand years of torment in purgatory! Oh! how I long to see them when they shall be free! Blessed Virgin, I thank thee for this indulgence!"

As the traveller passes through some of the lesser cities in this country, he will probably observe, close to some lofty, awful-looking buildings, a pair of iron pillars, with sockets attached to them. A stranger may know by these ominous tokens that the buildings belong, or once belonged, to the Holy Inquisition. A few years ago these iron sockets held a chain which was suspended across the street, and used to be "an indulgence" to the inhabitants! During one week in each year, every criminal, of whatsoever offence he had been guilty, was not to be amenable to the

laws, if he were able to touch the chain previous to his apprehension. The natural consequence of such an "indulgence" was, that the city was periodically cursed with the most horrible atrocities — annually gorged with a plethora of abominable crimes. No matter how heinous the offence, or how brutal the offender, when he had once taken hold of the chain he was safe from punishment! Hence villains of the most abandoned character were sheltered and encouraged; while virtuous and innocent persons, whose opinions or influence had rendered them obnoxious to the Inquisition, were dragged away to secret imprisonment and cruel death.

The inquisitorial torturings and atrocities of a former period have diminished in Mexico, from the absence of any opposition to priestly rule among an ignorant people; but the non-existence of such proceedings must not be inferred, merely because their perpetrators have the cunning to hide them from the light of day. Were the Mexicans more enlightened, the secret chambers of the Inquisition would again be filled with martyrs! and though the spectacle of an Auto-da-fe might not be exhibited in open squares and public places, as in

olden times; yet the chains and racks, pincers and charcoal stoves, might be put in operation, none the less cruelly and fatally because in secret. The system has not changed: it is only that the spirit of remonstrance is wanting among its victims. And though the holy fathers, who now lord it over the souls and bodies of the Mexican people, have less frequent occasion to soften the obduracy of stubborn heretics by fire and steel, they find congenial occupation in debaucheries and immoralities indescribable.

The Jesuits were driven from the country, and their estates confiscated, when the yoke of the Spaniards was shaken off; and the interests of the ecclesiastics suffered in some degree from the visitations of the Americans during the war; but the church in Mexico is yet enormously wealthy. It is difficult to name with exactness the sum of its revenues, there being no statistical information on the subject; but it is not too much to estimate the worth of church property in Mexico—consisting of houses, convents, churches, furniture, jewels, and gold and silver vessels—at the sum of a hundred and sixty millions of dollars; exclusive of the annual incomes derived by

the priests, hierarchy, and secular clergy, from their flocks.

The bishops and superior clergy are as numerous as they were before the revolution. Besides an archbishop and nine bishops, there are nearly five thousand parish priests. There are ten cathedrals, with canons and other dignitaries innumerable; and more than a hundred and fifty convents, containing nearly two thousand monks — Dominicans, Augustans, Carmelites, Franciscans, and Mercedarios. The priests and monks have the sole distribution of all monies bequeathed for pious and charitable purposes; and church property is still exempt, as it was before the revolution, from paying any tax or burden whatever to the State.

Some attempts have been made to infringe upon these possessions, on account of the relative poverty of the country, but the innovators have been quickly clamoured down; and though the priesthood is not composed of such well-born or educated persons as formerly, their sway is still unchecked, and their arrogance and rapacity are unbounded.

The various ways in which these ecclesiastics

enrich themselves and their church, deserve enumeration.

They make money by the sale of lottery-tickets which they dispose of on various pretexts, for the benefit of the convents and religious houses;—by the remission of the pains of purgatory to those who are concerned for the souls of deceased relatives: this is a prolific source of emolument;—by the sale of indulgences for different periods and various sins: these are greedily accepted by the people;—by payments from all who pray before the images at the corners of streets, and on the outsides of churches;—by selling relics and consecrated trinkets, as well as real estates; and not unfrequently by transactions which it is impossible to mention;—by retailing wax-candles and other church furniture to little chapels in remote parts of the republic;—by birthday presents, which they receive from their admirers and dependants;—by usury; for they are in the constant habit of lending out their surplus capital (often very great), at an enormous interest, to land-owners;—by the rental of houses and estates which have been bequeathed to them from time to time in various parts of the country.

But their most prolific and potent means of enrichment is at the bedsides of dying capitalists; to whom they promise instant possession of the joys of heaven in exchange for the earthly wealth they are about to leave behind them, or threaten with eternal torments if it be withheld.

In short, the greater part of the wealth and power of the country is thus in the possession of the priests. If it be asked, "What do they perform to the country in return?"—I can only reply, that they mutter a few "Aves," and elevate the host, upon stated occasions. They also eat, drink, and sleep luxuriously; feed upon the best, and wear the finest; play at cards, dance, and gamble with great gusto; lose no opportunity of extending their own power and possessions; and, in a word, take exceeding good care of themselves. They certainly do not appear to think themselves bound to be examples to their flock, to instruct the people, improve their morals, increase their comforts, relieve their wants, or even administer consolation to the afflicted—unless for the sake of self. They have their own interests and gratifications to attend to, and these absorb all their time and all their

thought. In conclusion, I will relate an incident in connection with one of them that came under my own observation.

It was noon, when the traffic and bustle of the most frequented part of the city were at their height; market-women were ranged about the squares, and under gate-ways and porches, with chickens, turkeys, and other birds in coops and cages, for sale; Indians from different parts of the country, also, cowered on the ground close by their small stocks of earthenware, cakes, and small goods; country-people stood beside their panniers laden with maize, onions, and other vegetables and esculent roots; tradesmen were busy in the shops disposing of their ribbons and laces; and léperos in the neighbourhood were on the watch for an opportunity to steal—all just as usual.

Suddenly the hubbub of the assembled throng was hushed, and a sound as of music or singing struck upon the ear; a carriage of a round shape, and of no very graceful construction, gaudily painted red, blue, and yellow, and highly varnished—with windows both before and behind it, and on each side, and drawn by finely-caparisoned mules—turns slowly into

the square. A postilion, dressed in a brilliantly embroidered jaceti, leathern pantaloons, a sombrero, and immensely large spurs, bestrides one of the mules; and on each side of the vehicle is marshalled a band of youths in long vestments, chanting a hymn to the Virgin as they move along. A priest, arrayed in gorgeous vestments, sits cosily within; he is on his way to carry the consecrated wafer to the deathbed of some expiring penitent—a wealthy sinner, who is, of course, worthy of his attention.

As the carriage approaches, the whole of the crowd simultaneously kneel down—the men uncovering; each one utters a prayer, and the more ruffianly the worshipper, the louder his supplications are sure to be. No sooner has the vehicle turned the opposite corner, however, than a sudden change takes place: all rise from their knees; the Indians, with fruit and earthenware, begin to quarrel with the proprietors of the asses and panniers for encroaching on their allotment of the space; they, in return, threaten to overthrow the chicken-coops of the market-women; and the shrill voices of the latter join to swell the discord. The tradesman once more puffs the smoke of

his cigarillo in the face of his customer; the lépero hurries away to the nearest gaming-place; and both the priest and the host in procession are instantaneously forgotten by everybody.

Let us follow the holy and reverend father to his place of destination. The procession enters the court-yard of a gaudily-painted mansion, and the priest is received with veneration by the weeping lady of the house and her sobbing children. With an air of condescending kindness, he stoops to bestow his benediction upon them; and is then ushered into the chamber of the sick man. A few of the patient's particular friends are standing round his bed; and as the mourning wife closes the door, two of the youngest children—one a fair child with light eyes streaming with tears, and her little brother—have entered the room unnoticed; their healthy aspect and sweet looks forming a strong contrast with the pale and emaciated lineaments of their dying father.

"Let all present leave the apartment," exclaims the priest in an authoritative voice. "We would be alone; to receive the final confession, and, by the aid of the Blessed Virgin,

to administer the last consolations of Holy Church to our departing brother."

The friends and relations slowly withdraw; the holy father watches them quit the chamber with a cunning sparkle in his eyes, and when he is alone with the dying man, thus addresses him:—

"It is the will of Heaven, my son, that the Angel of Death should set his mark upon thy brow! Ave Maria! Thou desirest the last beneficent and most consoling offices of the church. Are the supports and ministrations of our holy office precious to thee now?"

"Sacraments of the church—pains of purgatory—masses—charities—settlement of my affairs—provision for my family," are the only words audible from the lips of the dying man.

"In what frame of mind dost thou find thyself, my son, towards our holy religion?" resumes the reverend father.

"I desire to receive the holy sacrament at thine hand, holy father; and to secure thy powerful intercession with our Lady for—ah! —the release of my soul from purgatory!"

"Thou hast been a great sinner, my son; but the power of the church is great. Thou

hast been remiss in thy observances; thy penances have been neglected, and thy sufferings must needs be proportionate: but the intercession of the church is all powerful; and it will not be refused thee. Doubtless, thou desirest that the worldly possessions thou art about to leave should be appropriated to the redemption of thy soul, by prayers and ordained masses. The line of thy duty is plain, my son, and I believe me that thou dost so desire it."

As the priest repeats these words in an impressive voice, he stoops over the couch of the sufferer, and, with his own sleek hand, tenderly smoothens the pillows that support his head, and listens for the forthcoming reply.

"My hacienda in the south, to the pious uses of the church—likewise my three mansions in the Plaza—interest in the share-mine—my property at Tampico—likewise the third of my fortune, as testified. For the rest—my wife and family—my brother and—"

"Dost thou, in thy last hour, offer a divided gift to Heaven, lost man?" indignantly exclaims the father. "Dost thou think that God—and thou must soon appear before Him—will be satisfied with a tithe of thy possessions?"

"But my wife and children——"

"I tell thee again that it will require all thou hast that the unceasing efforts of the church may rescue thee from the tortures that await thy unhappy soul. Dost thou still hanker after thy earthly riches, and scheme for the sordid interests of thy worldly connections? Then perish in thine iniquity!"

"What will become of my wife and children? I cannot leave them unprovided for—without a peso—without a shelter!"

"Then embrace the purgatory that is yawning for thee! Thy last hour is come! Death is even now dealing with thee. Eternal torments await thee! Perish, then, in thy contempt and in thy crimes!"

"The will of the church is mine, holy father, for I feel that I am dying."

An attendant is summoned, and a notary and his clerk are sent for. "For," explains the wily ecclesiastic, "our brother is desirous of arranging his worldly affairs in the company of his spiritual adviser."

The notary arrives, the desired instrument is hastily drawn up; a trembling hand is raised to the paper; and a broken voice exclaims, "Ah! my wife and children!" The

hand at first refuses to sign the deed; but more threats and promises are resorted to, and at length the thing is done. Absolution in full is granted; the bugbear of purgatory is withdrawn; the last sacrament is administered to the sufferer;—but ere the consecrated wafer can have had time to melt upon his tongue, he dies!*

"Your money, or your life!" was the summons of the English robber; "Your estate, or your soul!" is the demand of the Mexican priest.

* A similar scene has so recently been enacted in England—except that the dying man in the case had neither wife nor family—that it may be necessary to state that the above account was written long before the bequest by the teacher of languages, M. Carré, to a Roman Catholic seminary, became the subject of proceedings in the Court of Chancery.

the abject poverty and wretchedness of multitudes of the population, and, indeed, of no inconsiderable portion of the church congregations. It is surprising that sacrilegious robberies are not more frequent than they are among such a people; but even the vilest, who would not scruple to commit any other conceivable crime, yet hesitate to despoil the church. Great precautions, also, are taken to prevent it; the risk of discovery would be imminent, and the punishment certain and condign. Some depredations the cathedrals have suffered, however, both during the American war, and from native revolutionary governments; but it is vain to look for any evidences of scantiness or poverty in them at the present time.

In the great cathedral of the city of Mexico, only a portion of the valuables are exhibited to the public eye; the most costly, as is believed, being deposited in secret places, and securely guarded. Still, there are carvings, balustrades, and ornaments; with hundreds (one might almost say thousands) of candlesticks, cups, and other vessels, all of gold and silver: indeed, the splendour of the whole show is most dazzling. The high altar near the centre

of the building at once attracts the eye: it is composed of massive silver, and completely covered with elaborately chased ornaments in solid gold. The space around this altar is enclosed by an extensive balustrade of gold and silver pillars, four feet high, and about four inches thick, with a hand-rail seven inches wide, having sculptured images, stationed at intervals upon its surface. The cathedral contains about three hundred feet of this balustrade, and the precious metals of which it is composed are but little alloyed with copper.

The cathedral at Puebla, also, is scarcely inferior in grandeur to that of the capital. It is elevated several feet above the level of the square in which it is situated; so that its appearance is most commanding. On the right side of the altar is an image of the Virgin Mary, nearly as large as the life, in a dress of richly embroidered satin. A crown of gold encircles her shining forehead, studded with emeralds of large size; strings of pearl hang from her neck midway to the ground; and her girdle is a perfect chain of diamonds and brilliants. The gold and silver candelabra that surround the altar platform, are so massive that it is almost impossible to remove them.

CHAPTER X.

MEXICAN CATHEDRALS.

Splendour of their interiors.—Sacrilege of rare occurrence.—Great cathedral of Mexico.—Gold and silver altar-piece and balustrade.—Cathedral of Puebla.—Jewelled image of the Virgin —"Miraculous" altar-piece.—Provincial churches.—Perversion of property.—Indulgences.—Form of an indulgence.—Removal of church treasures.—The caravan plundered.—Confession of the leader of the ladrones.—Recovery of the valuables.—Alarms and suspicions.—The treasures concealed.—Ecclesiastical watchmen.—Church sacked by a mob.—Three holy fathers buried alive.

THE interior of a cathedral in Mexico presents a blaze of almost oriental splendour; insomuch that a single scene may enable us to form an idea of the wealth contained in these superb structures, as well as in the numerous parish or district churches, throughout the republic.

Brilliant lights and gilding, stained glass windows, paintings and shining altar-pieces,

grotesquely carved and gorgeously decorated ceilings and cornices, meet the eye on every side. The altar itself is a luxuriously finished miniature gold temple, with hidden recesses and jewelled folding-doors, surrounded by massive and costly balustrades, and adorned with numerous chased golden candlesticks, on cushions of crimson velvet with gold fringes. Highly coloured images of saints, splendidly dressed, illuminated missals, vases of fragrant incense, and founts of holy water, combine to bewilder the senses. Figures of the Virgin, richly jewelled and gilt, glitter on conspicuous elevations, wearing diamonds and emeralds, pearls and rubies, on their foreheads and about their necks. Gold and silver cups, vases, chains and boxes, magnificently attired priests, and solemn chanting, aid alike to dazzle the eye and charm the ear. While a numerous array of youthful attendants on the altar, stand with folded hands, or are employed in bearing candles, swinging censers of incense, carrying holy water for sprinkling, or sustaining the long trains of the priests' vestments.

The wealth of the Catholic church establishment in this country is astounding; and becomes more apparent when contrasted with

Within a kind of temple, immediately above the altar, there is a smaller one, the door of which opens and shuts whenever the jewelled host is exposed,—by supernatural agency, as is believed, but really by means of concealed machinery.

Besides the cathedral, there are above sixty other churches and religious seminaries in the city of Mexico, some of them almost as wealthy as the one described. And the church establishments in the cities of Durango, Guadalajara, Zacatecas, San Louis, Potosi, and Guanajuato, are nearly as remarkable for their riches and endowments. The amount of money and property thus constantly withheld from useful purposes throughout the state of Mexico, is immense; and, if only well applied, might relieve the government from its difficulties, by liquidating the just demands constantly being made upon the State, and lessening the various burdens that press so heavily upon the bulk of the inhabitants.

Very striking appendages of these edifices —for they may be seen upon the doors, and placarded at the corners of the opposite squares —are the characteristic "indulgences," so often published for the benefit of society and the

emolument of the church. An indulgence, or remission of the punishment due for sin, may be either temporary or absolute, either partial or complete. A plenary indulgence is a remission of the whole punishment; a particular indulgence is a remission of a part only; and it scarcely need be said that a plenary benefit of this kind is considerably more expensive than a merely temporary one.

The language of these indulgences is abominably impious and profane. The amount of time for which sin is remitted, even to the month and the day, is distinctly set forth; and the agreement entered into between Heaven and the delinquent is affectedly clear and explicit in all its details.

The following is an exact copy of the form employed in such productions, which has often publicly appeared:—

"The faithful children of the church are forthwith informed, that the most benignant Bishops of Zacatecas and Durango have granted an indulgence of one hundred days for every half hour during which the images of the Virgin, of St. Peter, St. Michael, and St. Paul are publicly exposed; and another of three hundred days for each Ave Maria that

may be said before any of them. Likewise that the most illustrious and gracious Bishops of Puebla, Jolisci, Potosi, and Tarazora, for themselves, and the most worthy and excellent Fr. Pablo Jesus Christi Mentezuacon for himself, have granted an indulgence of one hundred and fifty days for the utterance of every word of the appointed prayers to our most exalted Lady: for every step taken in her house; for every reverence performed; and for every word of the Mass which may be said by the priest or the hearers; and as many more days of indulgence are granted for every quarter of an hour in which the aforesaid images are exposed, in balconies, in windows, on walls, or on doors, for public adoration."

Sometimes the indulgence extends to an absurdly long period of years. The subjoined may be taken as an instance;—

"His Holiness the Pope, together with the Bishops of the districts of Michoacan, San Louis, and Guanajuato, have graciously granted an indulgence extending to fifty-three thousand five hundred years, twenty days, and eight hours, to the inhabitants of this city, on the occasion of the present Mass."

During the troublous and sanguinary times

that preceded the first Congress of the republic in 1825, it was judged expedient by the authorities of a distant provincial cathedral, that the gold and silver utensils and ornaments, with the precious stones and other costly moveables, should be removed, for greater safety, to another church in the interior of the country. To this end, boxes and hampers, with false slides and secret contrivances, were made; so that, in the event of their capture or examination by robbers, the most valuable articles might remain undiscovered. The treasures were packed with the utmost care and secresy; and much deliberation was exercised in the choice of an escort to accompany the precious cargo. At length it was decided that one Tezarin—a worthy disciple of the church, who had been employed to command an escort under government—and his band, with several holy brethren from the cathedral, should be entrusted with the duty.

The caravan set out in due time upon their journey, with the utmost caution and privacy: the treasure being disguised under the appearance of a common bale of merchandize; and its guardians wearing the semblance of merchants with their escort. They proceeded for a con-

siderable distance in security; but on the evening of the second day of their journey, much to their surprise, the party were assailed by a determined band of ladrones; they were disarmed, and their luggage was carefully examined. Not content with merely surveying the packages, however, the robbers, as if by a strange instinct, broke the boxes to pieces, and thus the hidden gems and most costly vessels were exposed to view. Everything was ruthlessly carried away; the prisoners were left behind, bound hand and foot, and the robbers made good their escape, leaving no traces whatever of their flight.

For a long period, the secret of this daring and successful sacrilege continued an impenetrable mystery. The chagrined priests left no method untried for the discovery of the plunderers and their booty, and to learn how their secret expedition had transpired (for it was evident that the thieves had been supplied with previous information), but all their efforts and inquiries were entirely unavailing.

At length the immaculate Tezarin himself was apprehended, and condemned upon a charge of theft and conspiracy; and while under sentence of death for these misde-

meanours, he confessed, among other revelations, that the unaccountable robbery of the treasures of the church, just recorded, had been executed under his own direction. He admitted that the time and place of the occurrence had been planned by him; though he had submitted, for obvious reasons, to be bound as a prisoner with the rest. He also gave such information as led to the apprehension and execution of his accomplices.

The punishment of Tezarin was mitigated; and the principal treasures of the cathedral were, by his agency, recovered: but their history does not end here.

Although the jewels and golden vessels were restored to their old places in the cathedral, outbreaks and disturbances in its neighbourhood were of frequent occurrence. The hearts of the holy fathers were once more filled with doubts and fears; and so bitterly had they earned the experience of the past, that they had scarcely now the confidence to trust one another. While affairs were in this situation, news came that a church at no great distance from their own, had been entered and plundered of its richest treasures, and that a series of such robberies was to be appre-

hended. This report, which they had every reason to fear was but too correct, had the effect of greatly increasing the consternation of the priests.

The superior ecclesiastic and two of his favourites, had come to the determination, without the knowledge of their brethren, that a subterranean vault should be formed under a particular part of the cathedral; where, in time of need, the most valuable of the church's possessions might be deposited. With much ingenuity the desired receptacle was stealthily completed, and the entrance preserved a profound secret among the worthy trio. They had decided that the only means of access should be by a trap-door from above, closed with an invisible spring,—and the trap-door was cunningly fixed, and the imperceptible spring duly set, accordingly.

The disturbances in the vicinity increased. Insurrection followed insurrection; outrage succeeded outrage; pillage appeared to become the order of the day. Neither life nor property was held sacred; and the cathedral itself was threatened with an invasion.

"We must watch vigilantly and incessantly, from night to morning, each in his turn," ex-

claimed the affrighted dignitary to his companions; "for we know not at what hour the peace of our Zion may be threatened by these sacrilegious depredators."

And watch they did, night and morning, in parties; in obedience to the orders of their chief.

Many a dire alarm shook the hearts of those devoted old priests, as they performed their tedious duty, through the midnight hours, under the arches and vaulted roofs of the old cathedral. Often did they give themselves up for lost, when the echo of footsteps near the square, or the noise of the wind as it shook the fretted doors of the building, saluted their listening ears. The murmur of the breeze as it swept through the deserted aisles; the wanderings of the rats beneath the hollow wainscotings; or the crackling sound of some expiring taper as it sank into its socket, vibrated upon their overstrained nerves like the rush of a throng of plundering léperos, or the coming tramp of a band of mounted ladrones. Even their own voices, and the echo of their footsteps, became strange to them, as they cowered together and gazed from time to time into each other's haggard and

anxious faces. The anxiety and dread, at last, had the effect of imparting an unearthly tinge to their aspects; and they seemed, even to one another, to resemble those departed spirits who are doomed to keep a gloomy vigil through the hours of darkness, beside the well-remembered scenes of their misfortunes or their crimes.

At length, at a late hour, one stormy night, when the three ecclesiastics—to whom alone the secret of the vault was known—happened to be on the watch together, a sound as of a thronging multitude arose in the distance; which, as it drew nearer, was heard above the howling of the wind and the falling of the rain. The tramp of heavy footsteps approached the cathedral; shouts and vociferous cries burst forth on every side; the red glare of innumerable torches shone through the emblazoned windows. At the first alarm, the trio of monks proceeded to carry the portable boxes containing their choicest treasures into the vault below; and by the time the building was surrounded, they had concealed the whole.

Meantime, a series of thundering knocks assailed the door, which it was evident must soon give way beneath the repeated strokes:

THE MIDNIGHT WATCH.

the massive bolts were forced, the hinges torn away, and an entrance effected. Just as the band of depredators rushed madly through the opening, the shaven head of the last of the three priests disappeared below the entrance of the vault; the trap-door was hastily closed, and the spring was made secure.

But this movement had not escaped the searching eye of a lépero in the crowd.

The cathedral was thoroughly ransacked; many valuable articles were broken to pieces, and the fragments were passed from hand to hand; but a murmur of disappointment arose, erelong, that so few available treasures were to be discovered. The idea of a subterranean concealment at once flashed upon the minds of the robbers, and the supposition was confirmed by the lépero who had seen the closing trap-door. They immediately tried every crevice and broken stone, and beat violently on the floor with hammers and axes; but so well had the opening been concealed, that they were compelled to abandon the attempt in despair. Venting their disappointment upon the building, they demolished several of the painted windows, and carried off the choicest of the ornaments; and it was a miracle that the edifice escaped conflagration at their hands.

The beating upon the floor, however, had broken the spring of the trap-door, the holy fathers' only avenue of escape; and when, on the disappearance of the invading crowd, they attempted to emerge, they found themselves, in spite of every effort, hopelessly immured in a dungeon that must soon prove their living sepulchre!

The remains of the three monks were only discovered—fast beside the treasures which in life they had loved so well—when the marble floor was taken up by some workmen, who were engaged in the restoration of the dilapidated and desecrated cathedral.

CHAPTER XI.

A PRIEST'S ESTABLISHMENT.

Visit to the house of a priest.—Its situation and appearance.—Equipage in waiting.—The azotea, or flat roof. — Priest's daughters. — Furniture of apartment. — Father Perez.—Priestly interrogations.—Unintentional offence.—Rude expulsion.

BEING entrusted with a communication, from a friend in a distant city, to Father Perez de Hermona, an ecclesiastic residing in Puebla, where I was staying, it was not without a lively feeling of curiosity that I looked forward to the necessary interview.

The father's house was in the pleasantest part of the city, at a considerable distance from the manufactories; it was approached by an avenue of luxuriant trees, and the painted balconies filled with flowers, with the shrubs trained against the parti-coloured walls, gave it an air of brightness and loveliness.

At the entrance of the court-yard stood a globose carriage, decorated with the usual allowance of gilding and glass, with the ponies harnessed, and postilion ready to mount them. On seeing this, I was about to retreat, under the impression that his reverence was going out; but recollecting that such preparation was but the usual custom of the country, I entered the court-yard, and knocked at a rather low side-door. It was opened by a swarthy domestic, who received me very graciously, and bade me follow her to an apartment where I could await the holy father's coming. I was led through an anteroom, and up two flights of stairs lighted with stained glass; when on arriving at the top of the second flight, and opening a door, I was somewhat surprised to find myself in the open air.

We were on the azotea, or flat roof, so generally belonging to good houses in Mexico, and used as a cool and pleasant retreat, particularly in the evening. Two elegantly attired young ladies—whom I ascertained to be the priest's daughters—were on the roof; but becoming aware of the presence of a stranger, they retreated, with some show of precipitation, through a doorway opposite. They

appeared blooming and handsome; and their demeanour was modest and dignified. The azotea was cool, and open only on one side: flowering shrubs were trained upon the wall; beautiful flowers in pots and vases were ranged around; and a small fountain played in the centre—its waters sparkling in the softened light, and imparting a welcome freshness to the spot. Besides chairs and seats, there were two crucifixes placed in separate corners; while several rudely-painted figures occupied allotted spaces at short intervals. The whole exhibited an air of luxury, almost approaching to elegance.

Crossing the azotea, my conductor showed me into an apartment on the opposite side, where I was left alone, to await the arrival of the reverend ecclesiastic. The room was expensively decorated, and, at first sight, very splendid; indeed, its effect would have been perfectly gratifying, were it not for numerous little indications of a semi-barbarous taste observable in the quality of the workmanship, and, occasionally, in the style of decoration. Some attempts at flower-painting were visible on the walls, but the colours were too crude and violent; and the pattern of the floor-cloth

was rich, but grotesquely incongruous. A well-shaped table occupied the centre of the room, but its surface, though polished, was rough and uneven; a gilt frame-work surrounded the window, and a large mirror shone upon one of the walls, together with some rudely-coloured pictures of the saints. A beautiful couch, with chairs and cushions, occupied the other side. There were a few books and richly-gilt missals upon the table and on two shelves. Small gilt images were stationed here and there upon the walls; while large stone ones, awfully chiselled, were stowed into every corner.

Altogether, the establishment—judging from that I had seen of it—was one of the most rudely luxurious and magnificent in the city.

After waiting a most unreasonable time, the dignified and reverend ecclesiastic entered the apartment. He received me with marked favour and condescension: but as I neither bowed the knee, nor humbly requested his blessing in reply, his manner soon became more cold and distant. His look was restless and piercing; and the prevailing expression of his countenance, cunning and suspicious. His features were rather handsome than otherwise,

apart from their sinister aspect—but they appeared to bear down on one another; his chin projected over his throat unusually; the corners of his mouth were inclined downwards upon his chin; his nose kept downward sentry over that; while his eyebrows and the corners of his eyes were bent downwards, also, in a very remarkable manner. His speech was affable and conciliatory; but I could not delude myself into the belief that it was sincerely so.

Father Perez de Hermona was a wondrously inquisitive man. When our first salutations were over, he straightway proceeded to question me respecting my residence in the city; my object in visiting the country; my pursuits in general, and my religion in particular; of my political opinions; of my residence in America; and, finally, of my native England. I endeavoured to reply to his inquiries with due deference and politeness, and as distinctly as possible; concluding by a gentle inquiry as to his own opinion on the prospects and politics of Mexico, and on the state of education and civilization throughout the country. This, however, did not do at all! It was very well for his reverence to question

me, but as to my presuming to do more than reply — it could not be thought of for a moment! A deep shade, in consequence, fell upon the father's brow.

Not exactly knowing what to do next at this juncture, unless it were to take my hat and my departure, my eye fell casually upon one of the large, coarsely-cut, stone images standing in a corner of the room at my right hand. It was a lugubrious representation of some ancient saintly martyr, in modern pantaloons! on which said pantaloons were sculptured large and impressive drops of blood and water, proceeding from the agonised countenance. My gaze only rested on this singular object for one moment, and then I once more innocently regarded the priest.

Such a diabolical change surely never passed over human lineaments before, as showed itself in that priest's face in so short a space! Whether he had traced any irreverent expression in my countenance, I cannot say: he had seen nothing intentionally contemptuous in my demeanour towards the image, I feel quite sure. However this may have been, his aspect was so changed, that I felt a strong inclination to sketch him on the spot, for an

impersonation of Judas Iscariot, or one of Milton's fallen angels.

He spake not a word; but rising from the couch on which he had been seated, and glaring on me even more like an enraged demon than before, he pointed imperiously to the doorway!

Remonstrance and explanation were rendered alike impossible by such a summary proceeding; and in a few minutes I was gazing for the last time—and rather indignantly—upon the holy father's mansion, from between the two lines of trees facing it in the street.

CHAPTER XII.

MEXICAN AMUSEMENTS.

Character of amusements.—Government duty.—Cock-fighting and its patrons.—The combat.—Scene in an arena.—A bull-fight.—Further anticipations.—Battle between a bull and bear.—Horrible catastrophe.—Gambling booths.—The Fandango.—Minor amusements.

THE amusements of the Mexican people at the present day, are of the same character as the pastimes patronized so extensively in Spain, and some other countries of Europe, in the "good old times." The manner of conducting the sports is also similar; except that a few barbarisms, peculiar to the country, are superadded to those so carefully transmitted from European ancestors and discoverers.

Cock-fighting is a universal and favourite pastime; and the keepers of cockpits can well

afford to pay the government a commission, which is regularly demanded, upon the profits of their transactions.

The scene of a cock-fight such as I witnessed, occurs in a low room on one side of the court-yard of an hotel, up several steps, beneath a kind of pent-house in the shade of a withered acacia. It is an hour after vespers; and people are flocking to the place with eager and expectant looks, jocosely talking and laughing together as they go. There is an open space in the centre of the apartment, with benches arranged round it, occupied by a motley assemblage of the townspeople. Foremost, are some gaily apparelled young gentlemen, with dark faces, lounging manners, and a dissipated air; their smartly laced and ribanded hats set jauntily on their heads, and their serapés of unusually varied and brilliant patterns. Behind them are some buckish store-keepers, with whose constitutions amusement appears to agree better than confinement to their shops and traffic. Some frequenters of a meaner character may also be seen, accompanied by several females; and in the background are a few Indians and Indian girls. The company are evidently in most impatient expectation, and are becoming per-

fectly riotous, when suddenly their faces are all at once bent forward, the noise is hushed, attention is concentrated on one point, their eyes dilate, and they listen eagerly.

Approaching footsteps, and a slight sound, as of a suppressed chuckle, are heard advancing; and a rakish-looking man enters the apartment, bearing under his arm a high-bred game-cock of a bright orange colour, armed with sharp spurs. The man's appearance is hailed with enthusiasm; but the bird is so evidently the hero of the scene, that his owner has some difficulty to prevent him being taken and handed round for the admiration of the company at large. By this time, however, another individual, with a smirk on his countenance, has arrived upon the ground, with a cock of a somewhat greyer hue under *his* arm. This bird is not quite such a favourite as the former, though he has his particular admirers; and his owner gazes upon him with a mingled expression of complacency and confidence.

After a few preliminaries of consultation and wagering, the cocks are exhibited to each other and encouraged by their respective owners, who make a clucking noise, and stroke

the plumage of the birds. No sooner has each champion caught sight of his opponent, than his eye kindles, his wings flutter, and he manifests the utmost eagerness to begin the attack: they are then placed on the ground, opposite each other, at a little distance, and with a vindictive scream they both spring forward. Leaping up and meeting one another in full shock, they struggle wing to wing; they pounce upon each other with their beaks, and strike with their armed claws; blood spouts from the combatants, and feathers fly around. With torn and ruffled plumage, and bleeding, the birds are snatched up; the first round ends; and neither party can be said to have the advantage, though wagers are on the increase.

A short respite is afforded, and they are urged on again. Once more they encounter fiercely, and struggle in the air; and now one has succeeded in mounting upon the other, and pins him down; but only to be mastered and pinned down in his turn. Greater clamour and more betting! The orange-coloured cock this time is adjudged the greatest sufferer in the engagement; and the faces of his hitherto enthusiastic patrons lengthen accordingly.

A renewed attack; fortune appears to

incline to the victim in orange. The grey one —perhaps from over-confidence— has made several false movements, and has suffered much. Obstreperous noise, and betting higher and louder than ever. Another encounter, another struggle, — the greyish bird is the victor. Amid screams and languid flapping of wings, heard above the human vociferations, he is finally acknowledged the conqueror; and his partisans, after many disputes and violent altercations, receive the coins, small or large, that have been staked upon the fight.

A second battle between two fresh game-cocks is announced: but we have already seen enough of such an "institution" to satisfy curiosity.

Let us change the scene for one of a more imposing kind. It is mid-day: the sun shines in his full glory upon a crowded arena; his rays being reflected back from the burning ground, from burnished arms, glistening apparel, and radiant jewels. The heat is so intense, that the veiled ladies are glad to retire beneath the shades and awnings provided for them; and sundry gallant but effeminate cavalleros are proud to bear them company. The arena is spacious, of almost oval form; and the best

points of view, whether for sitting or standing, have been eagerly contended for, and are fully occupied. Noble and beautiful ladies fill the seats of honour, their faces glowing with animation and anticipated pleasure, arrayed in the richest lace and embroidery; their heads, busts and arms, almost covered with gems and ornaments. Gentlemen, strutting in all the pride of sumptuous full dress, high station, and fancied superiority, attend the ladies; their sonorous voices and dignified gallantries breaking upon the ear from time to time; and the gorgeous variety of their fashionable attire and equipment, adding a bewildering splendour to the view. Priests also are there—holy ecclesiastics, clothed in their ample draperies and sacerdotal pomp, and as eager for the coming sport as the rest of the crowd. Showily dressed and subservient attendants on the ladies and cavalleros, townsfolk and tradespeople of every grade, with attendants and officers of the arena, make up the many-coloured throng; which is fringed by dusky and dirty Indians lounging on the outskirts, and prodigious numbers of léperos and pick-pockets.

Impatient exclamations, oaths, and vehement

altercations are heard, mingled with the clatter of staves, screams, and laughter; pushings and arrests occur momentarily; and, at last, shouts of exultation proceed from every side.

A trumpet sounds, folding-doors are thrown open, and every neck is strained to view the scene, as a bull is led in—a stout, powerful, young beast, in all the pride of unsubdued strength; the sharp tips of his horns have been cut off, but he still looks sufficiently formidable. The matadores and picadores come thronging in their gay costumes, in great numbers and high spirits, mounted on rather small horses, blindfolded; and bearing lances in their right hands, and red mantles on their left arms. There are a few matadores on foot; and, though they endeavour to brave it manfully, a shade of uneasiness may be detected in their eyes as they glance on their huge enemy; and a tinge of envy, also, as they gaze upon their mounted comrades.

The signal for the attack is given; the bull is let loose; and bending down his head and lashing with his tail, the animal makes a furious onslaught. A cloud of dust arises, notwithstanding the precautions against it—that bull's tremendous charge would raise

dust out of anything—the ground appears to shake beneath the shock; terrific bellowings rend the air; the nostrils of the horses dilate in affright; and there is nothing to be seen but a confused mingling of horses and men, lances and mantles, with the infuriated bull in the midst of the commotion. The tormented animal is soon enticed away to another part of the arena; as it appears that one of the matadores has been slightly hurt, and a horse badly crushed in the onset. The bull, moreover, has been pierced by many a lance, and the blood flows down his sides from numerous wounds. Loud shouts of applause greet the sanguinary spectacle!

Another flourish of trumpets. More dust and louder bellowings; a closer and a longer engagement. The bull's horns, though blunted, do fearful execution; one horse is killed; another is hurt; two men are carried away; and the enraged beast himself, bathed in blood and flecked with foam, begins to gasp and totter. The excitement is now at its height; and dames and cavaliers gloat on the horrible sight!

Another sharp and brief encounter; it is the last: neither men nor horses are injured

now. Exhausted by loss of blood, the bull falls almost immediately, among the plunging spears and the hacking swords; and the poor beast, with prodigious throes and roars of agony, yields up his life a sacrifice to the amusement of the surrounding *Christians*, who exult in the slaughter, and applaud the actors in the disgusting show.

The affair has given complete satisfaction; but there is yet no sign of adjournment: still the spectators sit, and eagerly discuss the incidents of the hideous exhibition they have just witnessed. The measure of their barbarity is not yet full. A quarter of an hour elapses. After a business-like enjoyment of refreshments, strongly exemplifying their callousness, the doors of the arena are opened again, and this time a bear appears, followed by another bull. The bear is hailed with such extravagant enthusiasm, that his entrance constitutes a sort of triumph—an ovation to the spirit of bloodthirsty cruelty.

It would only disgust the reader to dwell at length on the particulars of this brutal engagement: suffice it to say, that the animals betray the utmost impatience to attack each other, though the bull appears most forward; the bear

is very savage and irritable, but sulky. The instant they are let loose, they rush fiercely upon one another; but the shock is not so violent as before: the bull gores his adversary terribly with his blunted horns, yet the bear appears to offer little resistance to his attacks; he only hangs about the muzzle of the bull. Bruin appears sorely worsted at first, and seems to have made but very little impression upon his antagonist. A moment's breathing time, each glancing with dire animosity upon the other the while; then they again encounter, and the bear is sadly crushed and mangled: still he hovers round the bull's muzzle, as before. His purpose becomes apparent when the bull opens his mouth wide to bellow; for suddenly the bear seizes upon the bull's tongue with his fangs. The tortured bull exerts all his strength to throw off his assailant; but the bear's hold is tenacious, and relaxes not till he has torn out the tongue by the roots! This decides the combat: the bull, overcome by the agony, sinks down powerless at once, and is immediately dragged off the arena to die.

The bear, on these occasions, is always comparatively passive, until he can seize his adver-

sary's tongue, and usually proves the conqueror, in consequence—if he does not previously expire of his wounds.

By this time, the evening hour is drawing near, and as a large concourse of all classes of people still linger on the ground, a good opportunity is afforded for observing one or two recreations of a minor character. The proprietors of dice-boards and monté tables forthwith begin to attract the attention of the throng; ragged Indians flock in crowds to expend their last granos in intoxicating aguardiente, or stand in groups scrutinizing the performance of dancing-girls; tradespeople and rustics of a better class form parties to dance the fandango; and the owners of fondas and refreshment-stalls in the neighbourhood are in expectation of a profitable harvest.

A lively group, figuring in the national dance to the sound of a guitar, attracts our attention at once. A pretty-looking girl with small hands and feet, dressed in a white cotton frontlet, flowered reboso, striped dress and sandals, is one of the principal figures; and a tall, dark youth, evidently her lover, is stationed opposite. The movements of the fandango appear to consist in inclining the head

forward and sideways; waving and elevating the hands, and tripping lightly on the toes through a number of steps—"backwards, forwards, and round and round"—either singly or with a partner; but always gracefully. Several couples compose the group; but the performance of the young girl, in particular, gives exquisite pleasure to numerous lookers-on, too old to dance themselves—amongst whom may be seen the parents of the heroine, their withered faces radiant with delight and exultation. The only blot upon the picture is the figure of a young man scowling grimly in the background, with his hand fumbling in his breast as if in search of some weapon: he is a rejected suitor, and his look is dangerous. As we turn away, after admiring the varied and easy attitudes of others in the party, a loud shriek is heard—the slighted suitor has rushed upon his favoured rival, knife in hand, the girl has sunk fainting to the ground, and the excited bystanders are endeavouring to separate the combatants.

"Monté, monté, Caballeros!" "Dice and fair play!" are the invitations buzzed about in subdued tones from one end of the crowd to the other. Entering a long, narrow apartment,

under the wall of a patio, or court, we behold a number of tables duly set out for various games of chance, and presided over by sinister-looking men, who do their utmost to entice you to tempt your fate. They have heaps of pesos, medios, and rials to stake, they say, and you have only to sit down with them to share the spoil; they are desirous that you should enrich yourself at their expense—you are sure to win three games out of every four—only they have a pleasure in playing: gain is not their object. Visitors are already seated at other tables; the faces of the majority burning with anxiety and eagerness; the game cannot be played quickly enough to keep pace with their impatience: at others, despair and anguish are even now gaining ascendancy over unfortunate players; and at all, high words, curses, profane exclamations, and the utmost confusion, are beginning to prevail. Unwilling to be involved in the rude brawls continually arising here, we take our departure, musing on the fearful character of this universally absorbing amusement, and emerge once more into the open air.

Suddenly we come upon a band of Indians, quite overcome with the liquor they have reck-

lessly swallowed, whom a very inadequate party of police-officers are endeavouring to remove. Their efforts, however, only serve to irritate the Indians; whose eyes glow with the fury of intoxication, while they foam at the mouth, and utter wild shrieks; those among them who are armed struggle desperately with the officers; wounds are inflicted; groans are heard, and death is not unlikely result. Drinking and fighting form two of the staple recreations of vast masses of the population of this country.

Without pausing to visit certain establishments in the vicinity, where nefarious doings of different kinds are being carried on, we proceed to a refreshment-booth, especially erected for the day. The principal stall is furnished with ice-creams, chocolate, nuts, spirits, and an assortment of the luscious fruits peculiar to the country. Mexican chocolate is the finest in the world; and is made beautifully, served up hot, well frothed, and creamy to perfection. This, with a handful of cooling fruit, affords us a wholesome, nutritive, and delicious refreshment; and immediately afterwards we take our departure.

CHAPTER XIII.

WILD FOWL SHOOTING.

Mexican rivers and lakes.—The salt marshes.—Wild ducks.—Formidable shooting-machines.—A sporting party.—A biped dog.—Señor Stiazza and his gun Bolo.—A half-caste bravo.—Ragged comrades.—Sunlight on the lake.—The game started.—Wild ducks slaughtered.—Zambo lost in the mud.—Rescue.—A sporting supper and encampment.—Pleasant anticipations.—An attack.—Flight of the bravo.—The party robbed of their spoil.

THE rivers of Mexico are, for the most part, mean, shallow, and unnavigable. In the arid regions they frequently dry up altogether, until they are again recruited by the copious falls of the rainy season; while even the principal streams are often muddy, narrow, and fit for sailing purposes only near their mouths, where they deepen and widen preparatory to entering seas and lakes. Those lakes, however, are noble additions to the scenery; and in

a great measure supply the place of rivers in many favoured districts. On the road from the Venta de Cardova to the capital, in the Valley of Mexico, for instance, the volcanic path lies between the great lakes of Chalco and Tezcuco; and the waters with their varied borders, and the banks with their deserted marshes, and feathery inhabitants nestling in the mud, afford the traveller a continued theme of interest and amusement; while they are serviceable to the poor inhabitants of the neighbourhood in various ways.

Imagine yourself elevated on a little calzada, or causeway, a few feet higher than the side of a lake, at the distance of about seven miles from the city of Mexico. To the north, you behold a series of flats (upon which a white salt sediment is occasionally visible), speckled with innumerable wild ducks. On the south, you perceive that the water reaches further over the flats, and flows more briskly on their margin. And on turning to survey the magnificent rocks and mountains behind you, the city itself, enclosed by rich groups of trees, lies opposite. It is, upon the whole, a singular and very attractive scene.

An astonishing number of the ducks above

mentioned are slaughtered daily by the inhabitants of the district; and the sport is distinguished by several peculiar features.

One of the most formidable fowling-pieces imaginable is employed on the occasion. A number of musket-barrels are ranged together on one clumsy wooden stock, or sometimes a number of common stocks and barrels are secured together; and such an infernal machine will sweep down a whole flock of wild-fowl at one discharge. The residents often proceed in troops on a duck-slaying excursion, for their subsistence in a great measure depends upon such supplies.

It was once my fortune to join a party of this kind at a distance up the country, on the borders of a small lake towards the north. There was a narrow shambling stream, not worthy of the name of river, flowing into it; on the banks of which we journeyed, till we came in sight of the district frequented by our destined prey.

We were eight in number. The dog was an animal of a very peculiar species, unlike any with which English sportsmen are familiar. Neither pointer, setter, nor retriever, he yet possessed the sagacious qualities of all; he

was taller than the general run of such creatures; and walked erect upon two legs: in short, he was a black man,—a Mexican Zambo! This poor, despised mortal was most happy to accompany a shooting party—as was his habit—in the capacity of cur, for a small fee and a portion of the sporting proceeds. His ingenuity in putting up the game at the right moment, in making expressive but silent signals, and in collecting the birds lately shot, was extraordinary. I confess it was sorely against my feelings to behold a fellow-creature take such offices upon him; but I had no power to interfere in the affair, and if I had, he would have regarded it, most likely, as an oppression and an injury.

The Zambo's patron was a withered, high-dried, half-Spaniard, named Stiazza, with prodigiously long hair and moustachios, a bilious face, slender, tough, and supple limbs, and a blind eye—lost by an accident while hunting. He was almost wholly encased in leather; his broad hat, short round jaceti, pantaloons and their accessories, were all leather; and it needed no very high stretch of imagination to fancy that his skin was leather too. How he contrived to endure the weight

of his apparel in such hot weather, was a mystery only to be accounted for by considering the force of habit. This individual was the owner of a shooting machine containing nine barrels, which he could fire at once, and which he had christened, in a pet manner, "Don Bolo." He appeared quite as fond of this Bolo as though it had been a wife or child; and was most proud to tell of his exploits in connection with it—how many ducks and wolves Bolo had slain, and how many times Bolo had been the means of preserving his valuable life.

His companion, José Pantido, was a Mestizo of a yet darker shade of colour, whose life had been spent either upon the prairies, or in the neighbourhood of the lakes. He was less in stature than his comrade, but infinitely more important in manner. He had a fowling-piece composed of five barrels; and his clothes were in a hopelessly ragged state. This latter circumstance, however, did not interfere with the grandeur of his style: wretchedly poor and degraded as he was, he affected to patronize the rest, and was the braggart of the party. Not an adventure by flood or field, but José had experienced it in his own person; and to hear

him describe the miraculous escapes and feats of bravery in which he had figured, was truly astounding. I could not but observe, however, that his fellow-traveller Stiazza leered upon him from time to time out of his solitary eye, with evident incredulity and secret contempt.

Two other sportsmen followed after, with lean and hungry faces, and awfully expressive features. They were miserably destitute; and the expedition was of moment to them, as they had left their families behind almost in a state of starvation. Their ragged clothing and emaciated visages, spoke volumes for the precarious and indolent life it was their choice to lead.

I loitered behind with the three remaining, who happened to be by several shades more "respectable" than the foregoing; and had, like myself, joined the party for no other purpose than amusement. They were armed with two guns, and one machine with a number of barrels; and were dressed, like me, in loose serapés, and leathern high boots and inexpressibles. I was, moreover, content with a common fowling-piece.

We travelled on in amiable companionship

beside the stream, till we arrived at the lake; by which time the sun was high in the heavens, rendering the sheet of water too vividly bright to be gazed at by the strongest eye, and causing the numerous leaves and bulrushes along the banks to droop their heads beneath his rays. When we arrived at a particular point upon the margin of the lake, where it was a thought muddier than elsewhere, our sagacious Zambo began to prick up his ears, and look as knowing as a canine substitute might have done under the circumstances. At sight of some indistinct spots upon the marsh in the distance, he motioned us to stop; then advancing noiselessly and stooping, he waited, inviting us to follow him in the same manner.

So soon as we were at his side, and the three infernal machines and all the guns were in readiness to bear upon the spot, he ran forward, hallooed loudly, and clapped his hands. Immediately up sprung such a flock of wild-ducks as I had never seen before upon the wing: they actually seemed to darken the air around us for several minutes. Bang went the guns and machines—away flew the main body of ducks—and off ran the Zambo to secure the killed and wounded. A goodly

number of birds were pouched by our hungry and ragged comrades, as the result of this first onset: though many, as might be imagined, were too badly riddled with shot to be of any value even to them.

Slowly and silently we sallied forth to our next attack. It was this time upon the bend of a bank, interspersed with one or two shrivelled trees; and if the ground had been slimy before, it was muddy and slippery in a tenfold degree on this spot. Staggering and plunging, we went over the marsh; and many a helping hand had to be given by laughing comrades to one another. We stopped suddenly at length, on a signal from our Zambo; who once more went before us, and clapped his hands and hallooed, as usual. Another volley was fired as the birds arose, and a fearful slaughter ensued amongst them. Shouts of glee ascended from the sportsmen, on their great success; and the affair was hailed as a glorious proof of skill and marksmanship. The voice of the Zambo rose loudest in approval, and his exertions to collect the scattered unfortunates were immense. I stepped aside to the right, with two of my companions, to look at the lake; which opened to our view at that

particular angle for a considerable distance; returning in a little while to rejoin our comrades, who had gone on in another direction.

Arriving at the scene of the last discharge, we fancied we could hear our companions calling to us; and quickened our steps accordingly. As we passed the trees, however, we seemed most unaccountably to leave the outcries behind us also. We returned to the spot in alarm, but nothing could we hear; we were about to proceed once more, chiding ourselves for taking needless trouble, when we perceived something black slightly projecting above the mud between the trees. One of my companions was about to fire upon the seeming excrescence of mud, in sport; but I held his hand, for I observed it move itself at the instant: presently it feebly rose yet more above the surface, and a man's head was distinguishable, while the most appalling cries of distress were heard to issue from it. "Yeogh! Yeogh! Todopoderoso! Yeogh! Misericordioso! Yeogh!" exclaimed the dark, muddy-looking projection.

After gazing wistfully for a moment in the direction, we burst into a most uproarious peal of laughter at our discovery.—It was the

Zambo! He had been climbing a tree to pick up a bird just shot, and leaning over too far, had lost his balance, and was soused into the deep layer of mud; so that nothing but his head —all of an uniform shape and colour from the slush—was to be seen. His employer and comrades had completely overlooked him; and but for our coming to his assistance, he would certainly have been suffocated. We released him promptly, but with difficulty, from his perilous position: and as we set him upon the bank to shake himself, never did I see either dog or man in such a plight before!

My companions made several other fierce onslaughts on the ducks, until more than a sufficient quantity were bagged; and I was wearied with the sport long before I could prevail on my comrades to relinquish it. I noted, however, that Stiazza became more triumphant than ever on the subject of his cherished Bolo and its successes; that José Pantido was more disposed to extol his own skill and hardihood, than before; that the ragged hunters gazed with savage ardour upon the booty they had accumulated; and that the Zambo—warned by his late adven-

ture—was most especially careful of again spilling himself among the marshes.

We finished the day, by selecting a dry place a little distance from the lake; lighting a fire upon the ground; cooking half a dozen of our victims over it, and making a hearty meal: then stretched ourselves on our serapés—those of us who had any—as the preliminary to a night's repose.

We retraced our steps on the following morning—after enjoying a few stray shots by the way, intending to arrive at the hamlet whence we set out, before noon. Every individual of the troop was in the highest possible spirits: the sportsmen were again boasting of their weapons and their aim; the emaciated ones joyful that they were provided with a large supply of food for their families; and I, happy that my stay in that portion of the country was drawing to a close. We had even arranged to have a sumptuous repast together off our prey, when we should arrive; and all was exultation, noise, and merriment.

We had scarcely made our way, however, to the neighbourhood of the rocks which reared themselves midway on our jour-

ney, when we were surrounded and attacked by a dozen ladrones, armed to the teeth. We had little in our possession worth stealing; but the robbers were evidently in need. On their first appearance the valorous José Pantido took to his heels, together with the Zambo; the latter escaping scot-free, while the former was knocked down and captured.

Stiazza and I made some attempts at resistance, effectually demolishing the sombreros of at least three of our opponents; but we were quickly overpowered by numbers. The rest surrendered at discretion—very quiet discretion, indeed. The vagabonds eased us of the little money we had on our persons; stripped us of our serapés, hats, and belts; took our wild-ducks and fowlingpieces—including the infernal machines; and then laid us, in no very considerate manner, upon the ground, and bound our limbs in such a way, that a considerable time elapsed before we could rid ourselves sufficiently to travel homewards.

On our arrival at the hamlet in the evening, I never saw grief and indignation more sincere than that of Señor Stiazza for the loss of

his dearly beloved Bolo; nor regret more earnest than that of the ragged sportsmen with the hungry faces, for their cruel deprivation of the allotted spoil.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ACCORDADA, OR CHIEF PRISON.

Obstreperous conduct of prisoners.—Entrance offices.—Corridor.—Court-yard and fountain.—Prisoners in the second storey.—Want of provision for the destitute.—Misery of lower classes.—Chapel.—Custom before an execution.—Prisoners employed as scavengers.—Prison for females.—Groups in court-yard.—A mock priest.—A jail instructor.—Quarrel in the water.—An aged gamester.—An ignorant devotee.—Obscene singing.—The basket-maker.—Obtrusive mendicants.—Officers' salaries.—Prison statistics for one year.

THE prison discipline of Mexico affords a lively comment on the very various and opposite experiments which have been tried in such institutions, in the different civilized countries of the world.

Within the spacious court-yard of the Mexican prison—the Accordada—may be seen such a horde of wretched and degraded male criminals as may challenge the lowest grades of

society in any other nation to produce the like :—some crowding indiscriminately together in corners, or cowering in groups to cheat and gamble; others yelling and dancing, quarreling and fighting, or dabbling in an unclean fountain in the centre; and a few repairing tattered serapés with broken needles, making baskets of decayed rushes, or hunting the abundant vermin. Here, vociferating indecent songs, or doling out lugubrious Ave Marias, — there, purloining each other's food and clothes; craving the charity of casual visitors, or claiming the inestimable benedictions of stray priests.

Authorized by an order from Don Meute Kiorno de Jiauhetes, or some other administrador or officer, you march up to the gate through the numerous guard of soldados on duty; exhibit your permit; and follow an attendant to the second entrance. A gloomy flight of steps leads to this portal on the second storey—the massive strength of which is adapted to its grim purpose. On opening the door, a confused clamour becomes painfully audible—the clanking of fetters and chains, the groans of the prisoners, the weeping of visitors, and the execrations vented upon

keepers—mingled with the tramp of jailors and soldiers, the chatter of clerks, and the boisterous laughter of the reckless. The first room you enter is lofty and spacious, and is dedicated to the transaction of such ill-arranged business of the establishment as its officials can find leisure to attend to. Passing this concourse of subalterns,—some writing, but all noisy,—the plan and uses of the building begin fully to develope themselves.

Behind you are the massive iron gates through which you have lately passed, before you is a long extended passage, through one of the strongly-barred side windows of which you perceive that the lofty corridor you have entered, is carried round a square court-yard beneath; in the centre of that is a pool of water, and around it are grouped the majority of the prisoners confined in the Accordada. The building is strong and extensive—as it need be, to contain such an astounding number of prisoners. It is wholly deficient, however, in the order and regularity which an establishment of the kind imperatively requires; the prisoners having little reason to complain of strict discipline, or very scant rations—especially the groups of léperos, who

usually contrive to lead as riotous a life within the prison walls, as ever it was their lot to do beyond them.

The different rooms, or cells, of the second storey are appropriated to criminals of a superior condition, and for the reception of malefactors whose crimes are of a deeper dye than ordinary. It is no unusual thing, nevertheless, to behold individuals of the latter class—some even under sentence of death—permitted to mix with the indiscriminate crowd in the court-yard, and wandering about from one range of rooms to another, at will. It may appear strange, at first sight, that the number of escapes is not greater; but there are many doors and gates to pass between the corridor, or court-yard, and the great thoroughfare without; and the warders, inactive as they are in the discharge of their duties, are yet sufficiently numerous to frustrate the most desperate of such designs.

As there is no pauper asylum, nor any provision for the needy and destitute, throughout the country, it is not remarkable—considering the brutal and degraded state of the poorer classes—that theft and murder are rife, and that the cells of the Accordada are

thronged with felons. The condition of numbers of the population is utterly hopeless. Without an opportunity of employment, it is not surprising that they are excessively indolent. Wanting in self-respect and all motive to cleanliness, what wonder that they are offensively dirty in their appearance and habits. With no possibility for earning an honest meal, or of creditably supporting existence for a single day, it is not strange that they are dishonest. Having little comfort beside the momentary forgetfulness procured by intoxication, they must needs become quarrelsome. And the Accordada being regarded as a refuge and a resource—a place offering the food and shelter they cannot procure elsewhere—they are not very solicitous to keep out of it. Thus the more intelligent and industrious portions of the community are continually taxed beyond their means, to support a gigantic receptacle of vice, in which criminals of every stamp and degree of villany are herded together, to their mutual deterioration — an exhibition of recklessness, crime, and misery unparalleled.

At one end of the court-yard, in the midst of the utmost riot and blasphemy, is the chapel —against the wall of which the prisoners

stoop and gamble. Here the inmates assemble on occasion; and, in the lapses of their profanity, repeat their unintelligible prayers, and chant their mocking praises. Here, also, criminals condemned to be executed are confined, for the three last days of their lives, to solitary meditation and penance; while their fellow-prisoners assemble opposite the door, at stated intervals, and strike up chants and hymns, by way of ushering them with due solemnity to the confines of another world, and furnishing a salutary warning to all parties concerned in the affair.

About a hundred and fifty of these male prisoners are every day escorted into the public streets, to act as scavengers. It is a revolting sight to behold these men led forth under a strong guard, and to note their dogged and malicious aspect, the evil looks they cast upon their escort, and the writhing unwillingness they evince to exertion of any kind: still they are made to labour on, chained in couples like so many galley-slaves. This exercise might be salutary to themselves, as well as to the public; were it not for the unfrequency of its occurrence to each prisoner (they are selected in turn), and for the excesses

they commit on their return to the prison court-yard.

The female offenders are kept entirely separate from the males; but, with little modification, the scenes observable on one side of the prison, form a tolerably faithful picture of those within the enclosures of the other.

In venturing down among the noisy groups in the court-yard, to make a few observations, the presence of an officer is a needful security against insult; while it will not disturb the occupations of the ragged and sinister-looking multitudes.

The first criminal who attracts our curiosity among the crowd, is one with a clerically shaven head, who bears some distant resemblance to a priest; and the idea presents itself that an individual of his exalted profession must be confined here by mistake. No such thing: the fellow is an impostor. He was formerly servant in the family of a "Padre" at Puebla, and becoming initiated into a few mysteries of the craft, had the audacity afterwards to establish himself among the credulous and superstitious inhabitants of a remote district, as a genuine holy priest. The fraud was for a time successful: the pretended father

was regarded with veneration by the people, and hailed as a welcome missionary. He assisted at several deathbeds; came in for numerous legacies; ministered at the confessional; and was the recipient of the most confidential secrets. He also accepted considerable donations for the benefit of the Church; but appropriating some of these acquisitions to his own use, the imposition was discovered. The mock priest was apprehended, tried, and sentence of death passed upon him; but it was commuted to perpetual imprisonment. There is not a more corrupt and shameless villain than this quondam "padre," within the precincts of the Accordada.

At one corner of the square, is a knave with a callous yet merry countenance, surrounded by an amused throng, to whom he is relating a few of the most racy of his past adventures. As the rascal chuckles over the narration of some peculiarly clever trick, the attention of his auditors is absolutely riveted upon him; and as the words, darkness, confessional, priests, ladies, and robbery, escape his lips, roars of laughter resound from every side. The groups around him are evidently receiving some striking lessons in vice at his hands—

especially those youths who have but lately entered the prison—and his hints and directions will doubtless be largely followed, on the first occasion of his hearers being at liberty.

Two men, bathing in the fountain in the centre of the yard, have been performing feats of swimming and agility in the water; and one competitor has so entirely outstripped the other, that the vanquished party, has lost his temper—or, rather, his usual savage disposition has gained a horrible ascendancy. Seizing his late companion in his arms, he forces him down, notwithstanding the vigorous kicking and plunging of his antagonist, whose head he holds under water to drown him;—assuredly, were it not for the somewhat tardy intervention of the officers, his atrocious purpose would have been speedily effected, amid the laughs and jeers of the reckless mob around them.

The emaciated object yonder, who has been chosen umpire of a dispute between two or three players at monté, was once a gentleman of wealth and station: boxes at the opera, horses and equipages, ladies' smiles, servile attendants, luxurious feasts, and superb mansions, have all been at his service. Unfortunately, however, he had an ardent passion

for gaming, and his splendid fortune and position speedily vanished: wealth, luxuries, friends, summarily forsook him; even his wife deserted him in his misfortunes; while his children were driven to seek a subsistence among strangers. His constitution began to sink; he was stricken with disease; and his next stage was to the hospital—whose precincts he quitted only to find that nights spent upon pavements and in court-yards were chilling cold, like the charity and sympathy of his former friends. The extremities of want and wretchedness became familiar to him—yet he was a gambler still. In all his vicissitudes, this vice clung to him; and while every other feeling had died within his breast, his love of gaming appeared only to gain strength. At this point of his career, temptation presented itself; degradation and want led him on from bad to worse; he became the victim of more artful accomplices; and the Accordada was the result. He once endeavoured to commit suicide by drowning himself in the central pool; and he usually wanders through the court-yard, mindless and hopeless—save when he can join a group of wretched players for questionable granos, or decide some dis-

puted point which they refer to him. A few of his fellow-prisoners have a feeling of respect towards him for what he has been; but though admitted to be an excellent authority on all questions connected with play, he is, among the majority, only a subject of ridicule on account of his vacant look, absent manner, and wofully emaciated appearance.

A singular being, with coarse hair which reaches nearly to his middle, and whose large, idiotic countenance almost stamps him as the impersonation of vicious ignorance, is kneeling in as devout a position as he can command, before a little leaden image—obtained most probably by theft His position is the only thing devout about him: out of his mouth, indeed, proceed both blessing and cursing, supplication and blasphemy; for not a moment ago, he was heaping the most horrible imprecations on the head of a comrade, who had nefariously made a "grab" at his portable saint; and he now urges his petition to Heaven with redoubled gusto, in extenuation of the dimly recollected, but very weighty catalogue of his past transgressions. Soon this impious creature will rise from his knees, under the impression that, through the

medium of his leaden image, all outstanding offences have been effectually cleared away, and that a fresh running account may be opened without delay between himself and Heaven.

A little beyond him, to the left, is a reprobate engaged in a very different employment: seated on the stones of the yard, with his knees elevated to the height of his chin, he waves his hands continually to and fro round his head to give effect to his words. He is vociferating a ribald song, in the loudest key of a disagreeable voice, to an attentive and appreciating group. At the moment when his companions join in a boisterous chorus, he springs to his feet, and dances with a grotesque movement; then all rise, and yell and caper together; and the fandango is only ended by the stronger of the party hurling the others forcibly to the earth, with a loud outburst of exultation.

There are only three individuals in this numerous assemblage who appear to be employed in any kind of useful labour—two of them are weaving some discoloured silk from small hand-looms, and the other is manufacturing variously-shaped baskets from a heap

of rushes beside him. This last prisoner is almost the only redeeming point in the picture. He was but a short time ago the chief proprietor of an extensive mine in the north; upon which not only his own wealth, but that of a considerable company had been lavished. Many thousand Mexican dollars had been sunk in forming shafts and working them: but the tract of land, after all, had proved unproductive, and the vast outlay had never realized, beyond a few veins of silver upon the surface, the value of a single rial. Indignant at their losses, and unconscious of the rapidity with which capital either disappears or doubles itself in such speculations, his absent partners turned upon him, as the active agent, and accused him of theft and embezzlement of the funds entrusted; so that, ere he could make arrangements to convince them of their mistake, he found himself confined in the Accordada. And now, possessing an honourable mind, and detesting the scenes of degradation and pollution surrounding him, he is content to weave rushes into baskets, to wile away the time till tardy justice can include him among the subjects of her administration.

But now the attendant has rushed in great

haste from our side—his attention having been called to the trio of vindictive gamesters, who are screaming and tearing at each other at the opposite extremity of the yard. What dreadful imprecations and malicious gestures they employ! How savagely they bite and strike each other! It is well for the prisoner on the ground that there are keepers present, or his opportunities for future brawling would have been brought suddenly to a close.

Before the officer can return, a general scramble is made in the direction where we are standing; and we wonder what can be the intentions of such an ill-looking herd of vagrants as rush towards us. They fall about our feet, and touch our clothes to gain attention. "By the mystery of the Holy Trinity!" they begin to exclaim. Ah! they wish to excite our charity; but the attendant keeper arrives at this moment, and they fall back cowed, swearing, and disappointed. We have by this time witnessed enough to satisfy us for the present, respecting the various and repulsive groups that throng the chief prison of the city of Mexico.*

The following statement—an average estimate of the number of prisoners in this establishment for one year—

may serve to shew how inefficient is the working of the present system; and how imperatively the condition of the lower classes throughout the country demands attention and amelioration.

	MEN.	WOMEN.	TOTAL.
Robbery	1,800	590	2,390
Quarrelling and wounding	2,937	1,805	4,742
Bigamy, &c.	421	203	624
Homicide	180	42	222
Incontinence, &c.	75	37	112
Forgery	11	3	14
Throwing vitriol	41	17	58
Lesser crimes	734	341	1,075
Prisoners for one year in a population little over 130,000			9,237

The sum disbursed in salaries of officers of the Accordada amounts to nearly 5,000 dollars; while 35,000 dollars are annually expended for the maintenance of prisoners.

CHAPTER XV.

A POOR FUNERAL.

Alacranes, or spider-scorpions.—Scorpion-hunters.—Indian costume.—Indian huts and villages.—Woman stung by alacranes.—Contrast of burial-places.—Masses for the wealthy.—Contemptuous treatment of the poor.—An Indian funeral.—An unpopular priest.—Dead-house of the capital.—Melancholy street scenes.—Grief of a mother and daughters.—Father Miguel in the Morgue.

THE tierra caliente, or hot region of Mexico, is infested with horrible reptiles called alacranes, which in appearance resemble both the scorpion and the spider. These creatures have tails two inches long, armed with a sting, and bodies equalling in size those of the largest spiders; they swarm among old houses and neighbourhoods; and their sting is sure to produce dangerous illness, perhaps death—especially to the delicate and young. In the early season of the year, the inhabitants surround their beds with a peculiar kind of net-work, for protection against scorpions dur-

ing sleep; and it behoves a stranger to be careful in such districts, to look well about him before he seats himself, or retires to bed, or even handles his arms or puts on his sombrero—for these animals will often be found nestling in such places as a hat lining, or the lock of a pistol, for security.

In some of the mining cities of the north, associations have been formed for their destruction, and persons who have nothing better to do are employed to hunt them out; a reward of two clacos (about three half-pence) being paid for the body of every scorpion or spider-scorpion that is brought to them. And as a light occupation is preferred by the lower classes inhabiting these cities, and as there is a little of the zest of the hunter about the pursuit, there is no lack of alacran seekers; though the profession is not unaccompanied by many dangers and discomforts; and great numbers of the vermin are thus destroyed.

Before the entrance of a low hut, five miles distant from the city of Durango, three figures are grouped together in mournful conversation; interrupted at short intervals by hollow groans and moans from the interior of the dwelling, as of some one suffering from pain

and illness there. The light of a glorious sunset gilds the broken ground and the frail erection upon it, and obliges the uncouth figures to turn away their faces, and place their hands before their eyes, to shield them from the glaring light.

The eldest is a middle-aged Indian, with low and retreating features, and a head partially shaved. He is dressed in a miserable thatch-like cloak, or serapé, made of twisted water-flags; and the tattered breeches that barely reach below the knee, leave his legs and feet as much exposed as the coating of soil and clay upon them will permit. The other two are youths, apparently from fifteen to eighteen years of age, still more scantily clad than their companion; their faces wear the listless, sleepy aspect so common to the Indians; and their wild and matted hair, starting out in every direction, gives their heads, upon the whole, somewhat of the appearance of porcupines. And now, with drooping heads and anxious faces, these three figures crouch down to enter the forlorn dwelling beside them.

The rancho (or hut) is a type of whole villages. No human creatures are more

wretchedly lodged than the Indians. In districts where trees abound, they generally select the foot of a plantain or palm tree; and leaving an open hole for entrance and egress, they place a few canes upright in the ground; then some thatch, or a bundle of flags, is twisted round them, and the whole is completed by an exceedingly slight roof of the same material. The hut in question has, in addition, a couple of logs on each side of the entrance, and a few palm leaves mingled here and there among the thatch. The floor is of mud, of a grey and clayey kind; a block of wood, answering the purpose of a table, an apology for a bed, consisting of two beams with a dirty hide stretched upon them, and a rude furnace and plate for tortilla-cakes, are the only articles of furniture it contains. On the miserable couch is laid an elderly female, from whom the exclamations of anguish from time to time proceed. It is long since any other scene has met her eyes than the obscurity of her wretched room, and she despairs of ever again seeing the sun rise above the hills, as she plods on her weary way to dispose of her maize and tortilla-cakes at the neighbouring town, as has been her wont.

The man in the cloak of water-flags is the sufferer's husband; and the two youths are their children. They are alacran hunters; and the nets which they use for capturing the detestable vermin hang over their arms. All the family have repeatedly suffered from the attacks of their dangerous prey; the mother —who had long been sinking under disease, brought on by filth and destitution, and unable to rise from her bed upon the floor—has been twice stung by them within a short period: the double shock has proved fatal, and she now lies languishing in pain, with no hope of recovery.

In a very few days afterwards, the Indian and his two sons bore the remains of the poor woman to their last depository, in an obscure corner of a neglected burying-ground, near the city of Durango.

In highly civilized countries, the rites of sepulture, even among the humblest people, are accompanied by an absurd parade of state and frippery; but in Mexico the case is widely different. The poor have no prospect of being laid in some sweet, secluded resting-place, hallowed by the memory of friends and companions gone before, and sanctified by the

pious visits and fond regrets of beloved survivors; with long grass flourishing, and wild flowers blooming over their silent bed. No hope of tiny feet pressing the soil above, and of subdued yet cheerful faces perusing the stone which tells where they lie. No thought of shady trees and twittering birds, of calm sabbaths, hymns of praise, and thronging worshippers: but all is neglect and desolation.

In the case of the wealthy, however, neither pomp nor expense is spared. To die rich in Mexico, and to bequeath the greater part of your riches to the Church, is not only to secure a splendid pageant on earth, but to possess a safe passport to heaven besides. Take no care for the welfare of friends and dependants: commend your family to the care of Heaven; reck not of wrongs committed, of wealth abused, of injustice unremedied, of urgent social duties left undone; only bear that huge, rich, national mendicant, the Church, in your testamentary remembrances, and your salvation is secure; and the number of masses and requiems to be said and sung, for the repose of your benevolent soul, will be proportioned to the price you paid for them.

The common people are interred in the most primitive manner, without coffins, and almost without covering; and death itself appears, to an unaccustomed spectator, invested with additional dread, from the squalor and heartless neglect surrounding it. The corpse, exposed to the public gaze, is hurried off, almost if not wholly unattended, to some ruined burial-place, perhaps at the end of a public walk,—provided there are relatives who are able to afford this—where, in a little chapel—if they are able to pay for the use of that too—a few prayers are muttered in a very unimpressive manner, and the body is huddled into the ground. No solemnity attends the burial-service; no consolation is offered to the bereaved; very little spiritual comfort is afforded to the poor; and that little is carefully meted out according to the grade and connections even of poverty itself.

The funeral I witnessed was that of one among the humblest of the humble — the poorest of the poor. Tupa—this was the name of the Indian—and his two sons were the only mourners; their hands had prepared the grave; and there was neither priest, assistant, service, nor mass; scarcely a word being spoken. The

wretchedly clad corpse was lowered into the meanest portion of the ground, in silence, only broken by the sobs of the bearers; and I turned, with mingled feelings of compassion and indignation, from the sight.

The occurrence reminded me of another and more appalling scene of death, which I had once beheld in the city of Mexico; and as it is particularly characteristic of the country, and not altogether foreign to the present subject, I will relate it here.

It is a fact not generally known, I believe, in England (so contrary is it to the usages of the Romish clergy in other countries), that priests in Mexico are frequently in the habit of living with favourite wives or concubines, and of bringing up their families in their own sanctified abodes. The practice entails upon them no disgrace, and their claims to mix in the best company are as eligible as before. But, in this instance, a padre, named Miguel, had ventured a step further: after living many years with a very amiable and well-conducted lady, he basely deserted her and her children. This circumstance had very properly diminished the reverence with which his character had been previously regarded in the

district. He was otherwise unpopular in society.

Having given offence to the vagabond portion of the community, by his instrumentality in bringing a number of léperos and thieves to merited punishment, many a withering curse and savage glance had been bestowed upon him; and it was whispered that a few resolute ruffians had determined effectually to stifle his vigilance in future.

Adjoining the Accordada, or common prison of the city, in one wing of the building, is a low, ominous-looking room, with a grated window facing the street, known as the dead-house or "morgue" of the capital; and on an elevation inclining downwards to the window, are placed the corpses nightly found within the city and its suburbs.

Mexico has no lack of melancholy sights,—scenes that are enough of themselves to horrify the sensitive, and to fill the mind of the philanthropist with sorrow; yet, of all these, perhaps the most melancholy may be witnessed in the public street, outside the little low-barred window of that dreadful room. Heart-rending are the shrieks and lamentations often to be heard there! Women bewailing the loss

of their husbands; orphans weeping over the corpse of a murdered father; a daughter, or sister, mourning near the remains of a dear female relative. Could the stones of this vault but find a tongue, mournful indeed would be their revelations!

One of the most touching sights I ever beheld at that solemn place, was the grief of a mother and her daughters. No agony ever depicted on woman's countenance, could be more poignant; as, dashing the tears from her eyes, the matron advanced to gaze through the opening —then retreated in horror from the sight— then returned to gaze again and again, repeating, "I forgive him all! I forgive him now! Though I loved him and he deserted me, I forgive him all! I forgive him now!" No cries that had ever risen to the roof of that apartment could be more heart-rending than the wail of those young girls at her side, beautiful in their sorrow.—"My father!" was their only cry, "my father! Oh! my father!"

Deeply interested in their appearance, and irresistibly drawn towards the scene, I approached the window, and stooped to look within. My eye rested on the body of a man stretched upon the inclined plane near the

bars, clothed in the habiliments of a priest;—the features were much distorted, the hair was partially torn away, the dress rent in several places, and the hands were clenched as if in the act of struggling against a violent death. I looked more intently.—Yes, it was indeed Father Miguel! His ragged and vindictive enemies had set their mark upon him. The knife of a lépero had found its way to his heart!

Although the fate of this wretched man could not excite much commiseration, his funereal procession yet presented a very different appearance from the mournful and unbefriended one which I have before recorded.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE AMERICANS IN MEXICO.

Adage respecting Americans.—Various effects of intercommunication.—Suspicious character of the Mexicans.—Commercial policy.—Restrictions and duties.—Taxation.—Consequences of exclusiveness.—Productions of the country.—Agricultural implements.—Habits of trading.—Changes in manners.—Education.—Anecdote of a travelling pedlar.—Mexican impressions of the American army.—Generals Scott and Taylor.

THERE was a superstition extant until lately, in Mexico, to the effect that, "whenever a party of Americans entered the country, they were sure to bring the wet season with them!" This prejudice, however, like many others of a more serious nature, appears to be passing rapidly away.

It is interesting to note the effect which the entrance of the Americans has produced upon the junior republic, in various respects: upon the habits of the inhabitants, on their opinions and prejudices, on their commodities and modes

of dealing, on their language, and on their general civilization. It is curious to discover how much ill-feeling, strongly excited though it was, has softened and yielded beneath a more familiar acquaintance; and to observe the ludicrous admixture of phrases and manners, consequent upon such association; the petty disappointments sometimes evidencing themselves; and the points of conduct in which the Mexicans have certainly derived no benefit from intercourse with their visitors.

Nothing could exceed the jealous suspicion with which the Mexicans formerly regarded other nations; more particularly, perhaps, the people of the United States. The hate and rancour with which the very name of American was mentioned, while hostilities were in progress, were immeasurable. But at the present time —though similar feelings may exist in the minds of many, in a slumbering state, only waiting an opportunity to burst forth in undisguised animosity—it is to be hoped, with a large proportion, that such kindly feelings are being fostered as will lead to happy results for both countries.

In respect of the broad principles of commerce, productions, and restrictions; the inter-

course of Mexico with other nations has at present led to few salutary or promising results. Exclusiveness and short-sighted suspicion still remain the governing features of commercial policy: liberality, innovation, and improvement being alike carefully guarded against. Foreign productions of importance are excluded as ruinous; and the country is effectually protected against honourable traffic—though left open to the lawless proceedings of swindlers and smugglers of every grade.

The evils of this narrow policy, therefore, are continually manifest in every class of the community: the means of profitable interchange are comparatively closed to the wealthy, duties and taxes being most overwhelming; and the poor are oppressed, meanwhile, by the scantiness of employment, and the high prices of all articles which would minister to their comfort. Thus a poor Mexican has to pay for a woollen blanket, or a female for a cotton reboso, as large a sum as would purchase *five* precisely similar articles; if the productions of Europe and America were admitted on reasonable terms. Mechanical processes are all at an extremely low ebb: even their glass and leather articles are very inferior. Their

boasted woollens, silks, laces, cottons, hats, and earthenware, would all be considered disreputable products in more liberal countries. Agricultural economy and farming implements are still more behind the rest of the world. There is scarcely a mill for grinding corn, I believe, in all Mexico; but the same method of bruising it is resorted to, as was practised in the most remote ages of the world. Their ploughs are of exactly the same formation as those in use a thousand years ago; being made of wood in the shape of a wedge, with no metal in them, and drawn by oxen —notwithstanding the vast number of horses and mules in the country. Other necessary implements are only like wooden sticks, with bits of iron, reminding one of rusty nails, attached to their lower extremities. And in every instance, no other reason appears to be advanced by your true Mexican for his apathy and backwardness, than the old and satisfactory one, "that such things were always so, and thus they must remain, for him!"

Some of their modes and habits of trading, however, have received an amusing colouring from their introduction to the Yankees. It is

not unusual to meet with a Mexican who believes himself to have superadded a portion of their intelligence and shrewdness to his own dignity, or who professes a fondness for American uniforms and tobacco. They will tell you, also, if you hesitate with respect to the fairness of a bargain they are forcing on you, that it is the American mode. Some stray article to which you have taken a fancy, they will describe—by way of excuse for raising the price outrageously—as possessing the American finish. I once purchased a travelling valise, which I had seen in progress at a saddler's the week before, as coming direct from the United States.

A few years ago it would have been an unpardonable enormity to appear in the public streets in a long-tailed coat—as it would now be in the more remote districts of the republic, so vain are the Mexicans of their native costume —yet of late it is no uncommon occurrence to behold several coats of this sort in a street at once; stiff collar, meaningless flaps, and hindmost buttons, all included.

Many young ladies, also, of the better class, seem to delight in lisping forth a few broken American words, on particular occasions;

pronouncing the English vowels with all the fulness peculiar to their own magnificent language; and making a most incongruous jumble of the whole affair. Many articles of established reputation under old Spanish names, with a few others of novel construction, now astonish their possessors by their new American appellations. Not a few conventional phrases and expressions, also, may be traced far northwards; and, upon the whole, an heretical traveller from Europe or the States, encounters far more forbearance, and is thought less monstrous, at the present time, than might have been the case before the period of the war.

There is some foundation for the belief that education is advancing throughout the country; though it may be but slowly. Would that an increasing communication with other nations had the effect of loosening the hateful bonds in which Mexico has been held for ages by the priesthood: then, indeed, there would be bright ground for hope! Extreme national prejudices and obstinacy would, with other barbarisms, soon disappear, with the spread of enlightenment and knowledge.

One cannot help wishing that a thorough reformation could be accomplished in the particular of gaming. This vice is fearfully, absorbingly prevalent: with thousands it appears to be the principal object of life: the whole of their time is devoted to it; and the most disgusting and repulsive scenes are continually to be observed as its accompaniments. It is far more rampant at this time than before the visit of the Americans; and, though it would probably be unjust to attribute its increase to them, it is certain that their presence and countenance had any other effect than that of restraining it. Superstition, gaming, and indolence, are assuredly the three oppressive curses under which this fair country groans and labours.

I once became acquainted with a travelling pedlar named Joaquim Gaber, who was in the habit of wandering from one town and village to another, with his wares, when he could do so with impunity. He was a pleasant fellow, and I shall not soon forget his frank vivacity and readiness in conversation; nor the appearance of his small, spare, incomplete figure —he had only one arm—as he stooped beneath the weight of his huge package; and his shri-

velled, sun-dried countenance, and piercing eyes, that appeared to possess the secret of perpetual motion. Nor his old blue serapé, with its raised woollen border and ragged edges; his battered, ribbonless sombrero, with its excavated brim; his shirtless breast, with its adjacent faded sash—his only bosom friend; and his frowsy leathern small-clothes—which, generously opening at intervals on his legs, displayed his old green garters to public admiration and great advantage.

He had an elastic, ardent temper, which, in spite of unfavourable circumstances and foul weather, ever seemed to uplift him again, as suddenly as he had been depressed. He was very intelligent, for one of his class; had travelled much in his own country, and appeared to possess the faculty of reasoning on what he saw—a remarkably scarce quality among the poor in Mexico. I learned that he had been once overtaken by some detachments of the American army, as he was hastily returning from a trading expedition; and had been detained by a roving band in the capacity of a guide. So soon as I became aware of this chapter of his past experiences, therefore, I endeavoured to gain some little information

from him, on the subject of his adventure, and the effect it had upon his mind.

"When the Americans marched upon the interior of the country," he said, "after gaining every battle on the outskirts, the most horrible ideas of their cruelty and rapacity were set afloat. As they drew near the capital, we were given to understand that there was no torture nor disgrace to which they would not subject the inhabitants, if they conquered us. The priests made themselves particularly busy in influencing the minds of the people in every part of the city, against them; and numbers of the secular clergy went from house to house of the wealthier classes—to arouse their zeal against the invaders, and to procure sums of money for the benefit of the cause. It was generally believed that our enemies were neither more nor less than a kind of monsters, permitted by Heaven to visit us, as a judgment upon our crimes and neglect of the Holy Church.

"For my own part, such a dreadful idea of our opponents had taken possession of me, that I could neither eat nor sleep: I was like one bereft of his senses. Every avenue of my mind seemed closed, but that of fear; slumber-

ing or waking, I was haunted by the image of our invaders; and I was in the act of making a precipitate retreat, at the moment I was surrounded by several of the hostile soldiers.

"But, above all, there was no deed of barbarity too horrible to be associated with my impression of the American generals. They were universally allowed to be the most atrocious impersonations of cruelty and rapacity it was possible to imagine. It was reported among a few that they had sworn by the Virgin and all the Saints, to hang every Mexican who should be so unfortunate as to fall into their hands; and I believe they were accredited, by others, to be emissaries direct from the Father of Evil himself, endowed with the most malicious determination to wreak his vengeance upon the capital.

"You may readily imagine my feelings of despair on finding myself in the power of such dreaded foes. I was in momentary expectation of being either shot or hung; and I could not at first understand why my execution was delayed. By slow degrees, however, I became aware that I was kindly treated,

and that my captors betrayed no intention of sacrificing me, in revenge for the cruelties inflicted upon American prisoners by my people. I was allowed to wander about in any direction, nearly without restraint; and, as I before said, was occasionally employed as a guide among the mountains.

"I was still more surprised when I saw the American generals. In place of the brutal ladrones which my imagination had depicted, and in which our instructors had led us to believe—fierce tyrants with bloodthirsty visages and hides like wild beasts—I saw two agreeable, fair men, with paternal countenances and amiable manners. General Scott had a meaner look; but Taylor attracted by his unassuming dignity, and awed you by his firmness: there was something so fatherly about him, that I have loved to think upon it from that day to the present.

"I am sure many of my countrymen have a great respect for the people of the United States; they have reason to feel so. Their officers were kind, instead of cruel, to us: they spared our houses and our property; they were just towards our store-keepers.—Indeed, in many respects, our city has had

cause to regret the period before they went away."

Such is a slightly improved translation of a pedlar's narrative of his first communications with the American soldiers.

CHAPTER XVII.

A SILVER-MINE IN THE NORTH.

Moonlight among the mountains.—City of Zacatecas.—A hot spring.—A convent.—Monkish legend.—Indian discoveries.—Protection by the Government.—Regulations for mining.—Different kinds of mines.—Processes for purifying ore.—Lawyers.—Unjust treatment of Indian labourers.—Payment in advance.—Indian custom on receiving wages.—Correction of offenders.—A thief self-punished.

THE scene is in the neighbourhood of an extensive silver-mine near Zacatecas, in the north of Mexico; and though it is at a somewhat advanced hour of the night, the miners—or at least a portion of them—are still at work. The effect of the moonlight, as it falls on the edges of the adjoining mountains, is very impressive, —its brightness in this country being intense: a hard, lustrous outline encircles the moon; and the spots and streaks upon it which resemble lakes and mountains, actually pain the eyes from the luminous glare of light which surrounds them.

In many parts of this mountain district,

veins of the precious metal may be distinguished even upon the surface, as they wind their course among the red-stone heights and through the broken valleys; and it is supposed that no small quantity of silver lies hidden below the narrow streets of the city: which, at no great distance, seems completely surrounded by metallic hills and barren rocks, studded with shafts and diggings, crushing-rooms and grinding-mills, mule-sheds and melting-houses. Were it not for the number of habitations near me, and the sufficiency of signs of human life at hand, it would appear, upon the whole, rather a singular situation in which to spend the night. I passed a number of huts, on my way here before sunset, belonging to some poor Indian charcoal-burners: near me, by the side of a projecting rock, is a curious spring of water constantly hot; and last, though not least, far down in the distance, on the outskirts of a little village on the other side of the mountains, is—strange to say—a goodly convent of fat friars! How it can have got there appears unaccountable at first sight; but wherever there is anything either rich, prosperous, or promising, to be found, the holy fathers are not far distant: it must

be a very inaccessible portion of the earth, indeed, where their unctuous and exacting voices are not to be heard.

Singular stories are related by the inhabitants of mining neighbourhoods in Mexico, of the manner in which discoveries of gold and silver have been made. There is one pious legend, most likely of priestly origin, about a traveller who lost his way while on a mountain journey; and who, at the point of perishing in the agonies of thirst, knelt down and supplicated the assistance of the Virgin in his extremity. She appeared to him forthwith, and sweetly directed his attention to a spring which leaped from an adjacent rock, quite spontaneously and especially for the occasion. The traveller satisfied his craving, and with much gratitude and renewed vigour, addressed himself once more to his journey; but just as he was casting a last thankful look upon the beneficent spot, he thought he could perceive some projecting spars of bright white metal, exactly on the place where the burden of the water fell. He eagerly wrenched a portion of it from the rock, and discovered, to his great joy, that it was silver ore. Setting a mark upon the spot, he returned with proper assistance; and,

having made known his acquisition to the government, and conveyed the necessary apparatus to the ground, he sunk a shaft, which produced large returns. He reared the ornamental cross and archway above the spring—I wonder it did not prove a convent with a splendid endowment—to record alike his gratitude and great success.

There are other stories current, which have more than a foundation in fact. Poor Indians, whose whole apparel and worldly possessions would not amount to the value of the smallest coin in the republic, have discovered rich veins of silver ore, while crossing the mountains on some nefarious expedition; and have made such beneficial treaties with the government administradores, that the Indians have become wealthy and considerable men for many months—indeed, until their prodigality and drunkenness have left them as poor as they were when their good fortune found them. Wretched charcoal-burners, also, while tracking the precarious and stunted vegetation which such districts afford, for the purpose of procuring stray pieces of timber for their fires, have found such specimens of another growth as have excited the envy, and fre-

quently the destructive propensities of their comrades, so that their valuable secrets have perished with them. Occasionally, too, the profitable results of such discoveries have been reaped by the government, to the loss of rightful owners; who may not have been able to obey the laws for their regulation, purely because they were without capital to satisfy the demands imposed upon them.

Still it must be said, in justice, that the government of Mexico—inefficient as it is for many good and honest purposes—yet supplies the discoverers and proprietors of mines, in a general way, with judicious facilities and adequate protection. It is the duty of the finder, when he wishes to proceed with such a deposit of the precious metal as he thinks is likely to remunerate him for his labours, to make a report of his discovery, its situation, and his intentions, to the government representative who may reside nearest to the spot. Then he must measure and lay out a certain required amount of ground adjoining it, forwarding specimens, if requested to do so, to the authorities, and straightway employ a given number of labourers, who must begin to work the mine within a given number of days. It

usually requires a large amount of capital to do all this, and extensive joint-stock companies are consequently often formed.

Sometimes the former owner of the ground will take a considerable share in the speculation—for he generally contrives to secure to himself the most profitable, or, at least, the most certain, part of the arrangements, and to dispose of the surrounding land for building purposes. It may happen, also, that the Government will, if able, advance a small portion of the funds; in consideration of receiving in return a very large share of the profits of the concern. If, however, the original discoverers are not able to fulfil the authorized conditions, any person whatever, who is acquainted with the circumstances, and able to do so, may take the affair into his own hands, and conduct it for his own advantage, without noticing the claims of the former parties in any way. When an individual is thus able to satisfy the demands of the government, the rights of search and of extension are allowed him; his claim to the mine is defended; he can carry on the operations for any length of time that they may continue remunerative; and the profits, with-

out any further taxation or deductions, are acknowledged to be his own.

It is not my intention minutely to describe the processes connected with silver-mining, and the operations of extracting the ore and melting it into shining blocks and wedges: but it may be proper to describe what appeared to me among the principal features of the proceedings.

There are different kinds of silver-mines; in some of which the veins of metal take an angular, and in others a semi-circular direction. When the men and mules who work below have succeeded in procuring some tons of ore, it is drawn up in leathern boxes, and conveyed by attendants to the receiving-houses; from whence, if very pure, it is at once transferred to the smelting-furnaces. If, however, it contains, as it generally does, a great quantity of alloy, it is despatched to the crushing-room, where a powerful bruising machine, called molienda, is brought to bear upon it; and when it is sufficiently pulverized by this process, it is adjudged ready for transmission to the grinding-mill.

The grinding-mills consist of cisterns, from fifteen to thirty feet in diameter, dug in the

earth, and lined with the hardest rock that can possibly be obtained. On the inside of these cisterns are suspended, by means of beams turning on a pivot, tiers of grinding-stones, likewise of the very hardest quality. The pulverized ore is thrown into these receptacles, the beams are turned by mules, and an impalpable powder is the result. Water and a little salt are added during the operation; and the mass thus presents the appearance of a thick, paste-like substance. It is then time to separate the particles of silver from the rocky fragments to which they have adhered for ages.

To attain this desirable end, the mixture is spread thinly over some convenient open ground, and great quantities of mercury, together with salt, and some sulphates, muriates, and other chemical substances, are gradually added to it, forming an amalgam. It is allowed to remain in this state for several days, when it is worked about and pressed by horses; more water and chemical preparations are added to it; and when the different components are by these means sufficiently mingled, it is ready for the washing or purifying machine.

The last-mentioned contrivance is not very

complicated. The amalgam is placed in stone vats, or tubs, into which a stream of water constantly flows; it is from time to time agitated with poles, that the water may have due power; and as the silver and mercury sink to the bottom, the water charged with the impure particles is turned off. The metal, thus separated from its native earth and rock, is then placed in the smelting-furnace, over which is a cover resembling a bell; here the mercury is sublimated; and the pure silver, together with any particles of gold adhering thereto, is left behind. The silver is generally cast in the form of massive pieces termed barras, often weighing fifty or sixty pounds individually, and worth from one thousand to fifteen hundred pesos, or dollars, each. These barras are considered to be a much safer kind of property than coin; for, being marked, they may be easily identified, and cannot quite so readily be carried away.

Notwithstanding the encouragement given to mining speculations by the Mexican government, the subjects of possession, discovery, and payment, afford never-ending opportunities of quarrel between rival companies and operators. Lawyers are consequently in great

request; and most companies have a legal adviser of their own. It frequently happens, —and this is an unusually happy termination to a dispute in Mexico—that the mere presence of one of those gentleman at a business transaction, is sufficient to put an end to an occasion of difficulty.

I must here exclaim against the base system of remuneration for service, which is followed towards the poor Indians who are willing to labour—not at the northern mines alone—but also at the farming establishments and haciendas throughout the country. There are several reasons combining to prevent the Indians from being active and energetic workmen. Some of them appear to consider it a degradation to labour in any way for their bread; others prefer a life of precarious plunder; and the rest are so abominably lazy, that any exertion, whether good or bad, seems to be beyond their power. Every proper inducement, therefore, should be held out for their encouragement and improvement; but, instead of this, they have abundant reason to complain of their employers: and the unhappy creatures being poor and hungry, are all the more easily imposed upon.

When an Indian is engaged, certain wages are agreed on, it is true; but then his master takes care to supply him either with a stock of maize, a little clothing, a small portion of land, or perhaps a small amount of money (which he soon expends in liquor) *on account:* thus a debt is created to his disadvantage from the commencement; from which, in the course of years of labour—in his unthrift and ignorance—he is unable to release himself. For his weekly remuneration is barely sufficient for the support of himself and family; and if it were more, it would only be an additional temptation to dissipation: thus the poor Indian, if not in name, is in reality, almost the property of his master; his first arrears always hanging like an offensive weapon over his head, and his services being always paid for beforehand. With no satisfaction in the past, no care for the present, and no hope of the future, therefore, the Indian never rises in the social scale: and perhaps his doing so would be unsatisfactory to the powers above him. While benevolent associations, religious missionaries, and enlightened governments, are striving for the amelioration of many classes of mankind, would that something could be

effected towards the enlightenment of the thousands of ignorant and degraded Indians, who form the bulk of the population in Mexico!

It is too often the case, in many countries where the active spirit of true religion has no existence, that there is an effete and offensive display of its empty shadow and unmeaning letter. It is so in Mexico. In passing through the streets you will often receive the blessing of God, of Christ, and of the Virgin, from a villain who would, for the slightest consideration, imbrue his hands in your heart's blood; and, on calling to purchase some trifling article at a small-ware establishment, the owner, who would not scruple to rob you of the clothes you wear, if he could do it with impunity, will implore "the guardianship of all the blessed saints and angels upon your head," also. Thus the poor Indians at the mines, before they receive their miserable wages, stand in a line against the wall of the pay-room; and each exclaims, as he steps forward for his pittance, "Alabo a Dios," "Alabo a Dios,"—"I praise God,"—while in his heart he is thinking of the pulque-shop; and the pleasures of the gaming-

table are dancing, in anticipation, before his eyes.

The overseers of the mines take the law into their own hands, for the punishment of delinquent Indians, and they use the lash without restraint. It is no unusual thing on passing a shed, or receiving-house, to hear the cries of offenders undergoing punishment; and they never venture—so abject has the spirit of these people become—to think of expostulation or resistance.

A melancholy and somewhat uncommon circumstance occurred a few days antecedent to my visit. While the valuable metal is undergoing the processes of separation and purification, the workmen in attendance are not allowed to remain for an instant unwatched by the overseer, so that no stray fragments of silver can be unlawfully secreted. When, however, the amalgamated mixture is placed within the smelting-furnace, and the fire is lighted, no such caution is deemed necessary; for the poisonous fumes from the heated mercury, that would escape were the bell-shaped cover of the furnace lifted, are judged sufficiently formidable to prevent any such proceeding. Losses incurred by wrongful

appropriation are, therefore, of very rare occurrence. But in the case to which I allude, the temptation to plunder had been too strong for the prudence of an unlucky Indian, whose duty it was to superintend the furnaces. In an unguarded moment, he had approached the vat with a long pole in his grasp, and raised the cover, believing the metal to be cool enough to admit of his abstracting a small portion for his own especial use. The vapour from the sublimating mercury must have suffocated him in a moment, for he fell back upon the earth below the furnace quite dead; and his body was found by his companions directly afterwards, still grasping the wooden instrument of his intended robbery, in its stiffened hand.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN AYUNTAMIENTO, OR TOWN COUNCIL.

Municipal governors.—Chairman of the party.—An important councillor.—A Mexican dandy's costume.—An energetic speaker.—Stolid gentlemen.—A dirty millionaire.—A victim of oppression.—The assembly dissolved.

BEING interested to see how the municipal government of Mexico was carried on, I one day attended a town-council, or ayuntamiento. In this country these officials superintend, in a very dozing fashion, the government institutions for the education of children of both sexes in connection with their native town; giving the necessary orders respecting books and materials, auditing the accounts, and transacting any similar business belonging to the town besides.

The meeting of councillors which I witnessed, however, had been convened for no definite purpose—there being nothing whatever for them to do. There was a prodigious din

of words that meant nothing, and of arguments never intended to lead to anything. Each member of the assembly appeared to think his own particular voice the only one worthy of being heard on the occasion, and to be bent on vindicating his own importance at the expense of everybody and everything beside; and the subject of adjourning to partake of refreshments, seemed to be the sum and substance of their conversation, at intervals. The council met in an old, and almost unfurnished apartment, in what was formerly a splendid palace in the town square; and, as nearly as I can remember, there were about twelve members present.

The occupant of the principal seat—who seemed to be regarded as chairman—was a dark and rather puffy man, with curly moustaches, an angular beard, and black teeth; dressed in a thick, ornamented serapé, embroidered shirt, velvet pantaloons, and thin shoes. His grand forte, by which he appeared to exercise a great amount of control over his comrades, lay in—hesitation. He was not a solemn man, nor particularly violent, nor yet silent; and he listened with some show of deference to all around him—but he hesitated. Nothing could

convince him; nothing could determine him. His hesitating accents fell like cold water on the arguments of the rest. The louder and the more flaming grew the torrent of words, the more he doubted, and shook his head, and—hesitated. And it seemed to me that the more this man hesitated, the greater was the degree of importance he assumed in the eyes of his fellow-councillors.

Immediately beside him sat another notable personage, who continued almost incessantly to droop his head and gaze upon the floor, then uplift it again, once more to cast it down: he appeared to labour under a most oppressive sense of his own importance, of the importance of town-councils in general, and of the importance of that town-council and meeting, in particular. This man possessed no other talent but the assumption of solemnity; but on this capital, his wisdom passed current everywhere. Though his appearance was anything but inviting—his features being harsh and irregular, his skin uncleanly and pimpled, his clothes indifferent and ill put on, and his voice grating and disagreeable — yet this faculty of solemnity atoned for all: and when he spoke, which he often did in a most

impressive manner, his words were treasured up by his comrades, as of sublime and weighty import.

The next official was a perfect specimen of a Mexican dandy, who must surely have made his way into that assembly on the mere strength of his laced jaceti and highly coloured costume. His hat, which lay on a table beside him, was of the finest material, with not quite so broad a brim as ordinary, but more turned up at the sides, and almost covered with fringes and rolls of red and blue ribands, with the addition of a jewelled buckle on its right side. His jacket, which was larger than usual, was of a brilliant brown-pink colour, thickly studded with silver buttons, and slashed and open to display as much as possible of his elaborately-figured shirt: his under garments were all of the most costly kind, and of the finest finish. His pantaloons, of a rich blue colour, were slashed at the sides, and studded with another collection of shining white buttons; the heels of his riding-boots were adorned with immensely large spurs; and he wore rings in his ears and on his fingers. His face was vacant and mean-looking. This gentleman had not much to say—such people seldom have

—but what he did deliver was uttered with a most disgusting admixture of assumption and imbecility.

A little, fiery, dark creature near him, however—who perpetually twitched his limbs and person about, like the figure of a monkey hung on wires—supplied a fund of eloquence amply sufficient for them both. He would insist on putting in his opinion with the foremost; it was of a very hot and spicy character usually, and he enunciated it as if it burned his tongue in utterance. He seemed, indeed, to hurl his speeches in the faces of the rest. He would be heard, happen what might; and he brought every limb and muscle of his body to the assistance of his words—seeming to speak even out of his elbows. His whole figure and appearance were of an irritable and angular cast; his face parched, bilious, and attenuated; his features like a hawk's; and his eye to the full as restless as his limbs.

Lounging against the wall at no great distance, was an individual perhaps the least inviting in appearance of any in the assembly. His mouth and chin were very large, and projected like those of a beast; his face was strongly marked and broad, especially at the

cheek-bones, and his eyes were small and sunken: his lips were thick and wide apart, his tongue lolled through his teeth, his eyebrows were large and bushy, and his thick and grizzled hair hung in a tangled mass far over his face. In short, he was a very passable impersonation of a human bear; for his manners were coarse and heavy, his speeches and exclamations grovelling and guttural, and he kept aloof from the rest, dogged, uncomplying, and wonderfully ill-conditioned.

In his two opposite neighbours, also, the animal propensities appeared greatly to preponderate. The eyes of the first were sunk in stupid vacancy, his features relaxed in inane dejection, his mouth moist and slightly open, and his person jaded and neglected: his morning's draught of aguardiente had been too strong for him; and he was all but highly intoxicated. The vacant look of his comrade might have been traced to habitual over-eating and over-smoking; and he talked and dozed upon his seat by turns. He had the most glowing complexion, and was perhaps the stoutest beneath the sash of any person present; and possessed decidedly the reddest and fullest ears and neck, in addition. He was

rather comely and well attired, however, and by far the most peaceable and orderly member of the fraternity.

Close beside these sat a dirty, frowsy man, with blanket old and soiled, hat crushed and adust, leathern pantaloons faded, boots thick and unused to friction, and linen almost as sombre as his complexion. Yet he was a genuine town-councillor, and his opinion was received with as much consideration as another's;—he was a rich man, and well known to be such, though considering it to be no part of his duty to his neighbour, to keep himself outwardly clean and respectable.

The end of the table was graced by a tall, gaunt, and scowling individual, who evidently lived and breathed in an atmosphere of injury; his life had been a martyrdom to the injustice of other people! He did not endure the oppression of mankind without raising his voice in self-defence, however; but exclaimed against human nature generally, and the dealings of the government especially, with the utmost energy and vehemence. That man must have helped to originate a score of pronunciamientos and rebellions in a few years; and his spirit was unsated yet. Still his

watchword was change—political and universal change. He knew his greatness; he proclaimed his own merits; and evidently felt himself to be the man for the times!

I was proceeding to note the characteristics of the few remaining officials—who, by-the-way, appeared the least remarkable persons of the assembly—when a clock in the apartment struck two. The circumstance seemed neither strange nor important;—but the sound was no sooner heard than every individual of the ayuntamiento — whether sulky, important, shabby, foppish, or injured—let his arguments fall to the ground at once, and hastily retreated into an inner room; so that I saw them no more. The clock had chimed the dinner-hour.

CHAPTER XIX.

SCENES BEFORE THE ADMINISTRADORES.

Mexican magistrates.—A narrative before the bench.—A mountain pathway.—Indian adventurers.—A journey to the capital.—Clouds and sunshine.—The city in prospect.—Abrupt change in conversation.—An oath extorted.—Plunder and accidental death of the young Indian.—A remorseless comrade.—Narrative of a poor wanderer.—Houses in Quito.—Tornadoes.—Description of an earthquake.—Distressing situation.—The sole survivor.—A committal to the Accordada.—Appalling sights in the city.—Victims of vitriol-throwing.—A child's face obliterated.—Scavengers from the Accordada.—Vitriol-throwing in Mexico.—An officer's story.—A criminal's revenge.

A BENCH of magistrates is a somewhat imposing sight, in any country—even to a comparatively unconcerned spectator. Such an air of conscious dignity and importance sits upon the faces of those "potent, grave, and reverend seigniors," as they scrutinize a prisoner on his entrance; so portentous are

their aspects as they lay their heads together and consult in an under-tone; and so awful is their delivery when "we," after mature deliberation, have come to a decision! The judicial authorities of Mexico are no exception to this general remark; indeed they seem more imperious than ordinary, in proportion to the wretchedness and ignorance with which they have continually to deal.

The following are a few scenes and circumstances which came to my knowledge, on visiting a court of administradores (justices), in the Accordada of the City of Mexico.

The centre of the range of mountains west of the capital, is traversed by a highway shut in on one side by craggy cliffs, having on the other a steep declivity composed of jagged and knotted rocks. This road is very solitary and perilous, particularly where for about a hundred yards it passes over a ledge of rock only about four feet wide, overhanging a precipice, from which even sure-footed mules, too heavily laden, have missed footing and slipped to be dashed to pieces on the rocks below. There is nothing to disturb the impression which the wild and desolate character of the scene makes on the mind of a traveller, but a

number of rude crosses erected at intervals along the route—mementos of unsuspecting wayfarers who have been murdered by ladrones, while on their mountain journey.

Two miserably-clad Indians—one a strongly-built, short man, the other a youth about seventeen years of age—were making the best of their way over this road, at noon on a cloudy day. Both were natives of the same remote village, where from infancy they had obtained a scanty livelihood by alternately begging and working in the fields of haciendas; but having been unusually industrious for the last three months, they had appropriated a portion of their earnings to take a trip to the city of Mexico; there to establish themselves in the listless occupation of léperos, in the hope of living comfortably in future, without laborious exertion.

On their arrival in the midst of the Sierra—just where the traveller hopes to obtain a glimpse of the city to which he is bound—the sky was lowering and overcast, and some drops of a passing shower were felt; but soon the sun burst forth overhead, brilliantly lighting up the road the travellers were taking, and spanning with a rainbow the declivity

on their right hand. The countenance of the younger shewed a faint reflection of the sunlight near them, but the face of the other lowered like the lurid pile of clouds gathered in the distance; and as they plodded on in company, the youth gazed, half in fear and half in curiosity, upon the sullen contortions of his companion's countenance.

"You are very dull and silent, all at once, Sanchez," at length he exclaimed. "For my part, our near approach to the city fills me with delight. It can't be far off now, and already I can fancy its fine towers, and splendid churches — ay, even the squares and corners where you and I shall stand to ask alms. Oh! what a glorious life! What a prospect is before us!"

"Yes! and the gaming-tables, and the pulque-stores, and the aguardiente, and the comrades we shall have!" replied his companion, quickly. "'T will be different, indeed, from the miserable life we have led in the old village. But I wish we were there, for I can scarcely command patience until our arrival."

"Think of the charitable old monks and ladies, and the rich citizens!" resumed the youth, with enthusiasm.

"Ay! and the fruits exposed to plunder, and the food that is to be had for the taking, and the gold that is to be found upon the pavements!" echoed the other, with an ill-concealed taunt in his manner.

"We must see each other, Sanchez, very often, you know: it will be so pleasant to have somebody to talk to whom we know, will it not? Oh! what a pleasant prospect!"

"Yes! it is a pleasant prospect—for me," replied his comrade. "But as to you——"

"What, Sanchez! Is my chance worse than your own? I can make myself useful in many ways."

"It is a good prospect for me, I was going to say," repeated Sanchez, "and it might be for you also, Nazas, but for one reason."

"And what is that? Tell me—oh, do tell me, quickly, that I may remove it."

"You would do well enough, I have no doubt," again said Sanchez, ferociously, "but for one reason—and that is, you will never get there!"

"Never get there!" exclaimed the poor youth, glancing in affright upon the darkening countenance of his companion.

"You will never get there, I tell you!"

shouted the wretch, seeing that they were now fairly in the centre of the narrow ledge of rock already mentioned. "Down upon your knees!" he continued, seizing his comrade by the throat—"Down upon your knees! Give me every grano of the money you have in your possession, and swear to me by all the saints that you will return at once to the village and tell nobody what has happened,—or I will fling you over this rock, as I would a dead wolf.—Swear! swear!"

"I do swear!" cried Nazas, sinking in terror upon his knees. "I swear by all the saints, by the blessed Virgin, by St. Peter, St. Lazarus, and——but spare my life! I swear!"

"Swear that you will never disclose to any one what has now happened you, or, trust me, I shall still have the means of following you, even at the village!"

"I do—by St. Paul, and St. Matthew, and St. Clara, and St. Anthony, and St. Bridget, and St. Barbar——"

"Now then for the money. Every grano! or over you go this instant. Is that all? Have you no more? I must search for myself.—

There! Now thank your stars you have got off so easily—and beware!"

The poor, plundered youth turned, with a sinking heart, to retrace his steps to his native village; bemoaning his ruined hopes, and heartily regretting that he had left his home with such a companion.

He had not proceeded far before he unwittingly turned to take a last look in the direction of the city; and as he did so he felt a sudden chill creep over him, as if in apprehension of impending danger. He looked up at the sky above him—it had become bright and tranquil; then at the earth at his feet: it was true he was upon the narrow pass; but then he clung closely to the rocks on his side, and thought he had nothing to fear on that account. Just at this instant, the scoundrel Sanchez, his old companion, also turned; and seeing that his victim hesitated and looked back, he raised his hand with a threatening movement, hastily advancing a few steps and shouting.

This action, and the apprehension it excited, proved too much for the young Indian's presence of mind; he quitted his hold upon the rock, and began to fly from his fancied pursuer —his foot slipped—he fell over the precipice—

—and before he could reach the bottom, he was a crushed and mangled corpse. His late comrade returned to the spot where he fell; glanced for a moment at the body as it lay beneath; and then, without betraying the slightest emotion or compunction, hurried on his way, and arrived in due time before the city gates.

Little as he suspected it, however, and unfrequent as detection is in this country, Sanchez had been watched by an arriero on the same route, from the moment of his returning to the precipice; and was in consequence apprehended immediately on his arrival. The particulars here related were elicited in the course of his examination before the administradores, which ended by the prisoner being remanded for further examination.

The next case that claimed the attention of the magistrates was a truly pitiable one. The prisoner was a miserably feeble object, scarcely covered by fluttering many-coloured rags, and his sunken face was almost blackened by heat and excessive exposure to the weather. The accusation against him was two-fold,—he had feloniously introduced himself, a foreigner, into the country, without license, or carta del seguridad; and, having subsisted in a preca-

rious manner on charity during many months, had satisfied his hunger at length, unlawfully, at the expense of others. I was deeply moved by his appearance, and still more by the faltering accents and tone of anguish in which the details of his defence were delivered.

"I am a native of Quito," he said (I give his story in a more connected form than his own in relating it), "and would to Heaven I were in my native country at this moment; for I love it dearly, tempestuous and dangerous as it is. Time there passed joyously with me; I was prosperous and independent: I had my one-story cottage (all the houses there are low, having the whole of their apartments on the ground) and it was well stored both with tenants and provisions. Health and friends, family and position, fields, orchards, and cattle, all were mine. But I must not allude to them, or my heart will burst!

"The land of my birth—as perhaps you know, Señores—is nearly ten thousand feet above the level of the sea, and is liable to the most awful earthquakes and tornadoes. The hamlet in which I resided had several times suffered from these causes: often had our dwell-

ings been unroofed, and partially scattered to the winds, and our fruit-trees torn up by the roots; and even whole woods of trees, huge rocks, and entire houses, had altogether disappeared. It was long, however, since such an occurrence had taken place amongst us, and we lived on without apprehension of coming evils.

"But in one night, without any warning beyond an unusual redness in the sky, the horrible and destroying tempest burst upon us. All that was ever told of the loudest thunder, all that was ever seen of the most vivid lightning, would fail to picture the terrific visitation of that night! The earth shook and groaned, and opened wide, beneath us and around us! Forests of gigantic trees were uprooted and tossed high in air, to meet in fearful shocks, and be driven down again upon the ground! Rocks were riven and swallowed up in yawning chasms, or scattered into fragments and dispersed like hail before the tearing wind. Fields of spreading corn were cut to pieces, and set on fire by the lightning; while the thunder of the clouds seemed to find an echo in the vibrating earth below! Cattle were lifted from their feet and

dashed down precipices, or were hurried off before the blast to perish in the sea, far away! Sheds and buildings were scattered about on every side, or crushed by falling rocks, and, together with their inmates, were ground to dust in the convulsion! Human bodies were hurled into the air and driven from point to point, until they found a grave fathoms deep below the ground! Blue and yellow flames burst from the edges of sinking rocks; while hot springs of water gushed upwards from sulphureous caverns! Shrieks and howls from dying animals, awful in themselves, were drowned in the overwhelming uproar. Rain poured down in torrents, and pillars of steaming vapour seemed to unite both earth and sky! Thick darkness reigned but for a moment, as sheet after sheet of vivid lightning made the horizon visible, and cast a burning distinctness over the whole scene! Oh! what a time it was! Mother of Heaven! what an awful time it was!

"My own house was one of the first destroyed: it was shivered to pieces in an instant, and the whole of its inhabitants were either buried among its ruins, or violently precipitated on the rocks. I was whirled into a

yawning cavity, where I long lay insensible: I felt it rock and tremble fearfully when I recovered, but fortunately it closed not. No other member of my family survived. On the morning of the next day, when the earth had ceased to vibrate, and the storm had spent its strength, I feebly rose from my retreat, and searched with a stricken heart among the ruins and bodies around me. Judge of my feelings at discovering no trace of any one who had been dear to me, and that I was the only human being who had been preserved alive!

"Since that period, I have been desolate and a wanderer. As an alleviation to my misery, I resolved to travel to other countries. I have kept my vow; I have toiled on, in difficulty and destitution, ever northwards, to this place—and here I think my wanderings will soon be ended."

Of the remainder of this poor wayfarer's defence,—how he accounted for having eluded the officers at the city gates, and pleaded guilty to the charge of theft while in want,—I took no notes; nor how the tears fell in torrents from his cheeks in the course of his narrative, insomuch that the administradores them-

selves were visibly affected. The scene closed by his committal to the prison of the Accordada; and he would have but little cause—remembering the wretched and uncertain life he had so lately led—to regret the circumstance.

I might have remained to make myself acquainted with the unpleasant incidents of another case; but being already acquainted with the existence of such perpetrations, I withdrew on its commencement. The delinquents were two vagrant Indians, male and female, charged with throwing a quantity of vitriol over the clothes and persons of two ladies, who had refused to bestow upon them their charity. The prisoners were among the most callous and ruffianly I had ever seen; the countenance of the man appeared hopelessly reckless and brutal; and the indifference of the woman was almost as great: she refused to make reply to the questions put to her, and very composedly smoked a cigarrito during the proceedings.

This atrocious practice of vitriol-throwing is so rife in Mexico, that its appalling evidences are frequently visible in the streets.

Passing through a narrow lane in the city a few days ago, I beheld a sight which horrified me while yet at a distance. Beside a stall for

the sale of oranges, cream, and other trifling refreshments, stooped a figure bearing some faint resemblance to a human being—apparently, a female—whose head and face were completely covered with a tightly-fitting, reddish-brown reboso. As I drew nearer, my eyes rested upon what ought to have been the face of a fellow-creature, but which was so no longer: in the place of human lineaments, was an awful void; nearly every vestige of the image in which man was created being obliterated. There remained only some dim indications of eyes, and a bleared cavity supplied the place of a mouth; but forehead and cheeks, nose and chin, lips and ears, were mingled into one hideous, shapeless mass; even the hair and eyebrows seemed to have shrunk away, and the remaining skin was seamed and barred with red and black. Still the wretched being moved in her place at the table, and her appearance in other respects resembled that of storekeepers near her in the street. I could not endure to look at her long, but hurried on: strive against it as I would, however, the revolting object haunted me for the remainder of the day and in the night.

Two days afterwards, before the impression

just described had sufficient time to wear away, my attention was attracted by a richly-dressed lady promenading a fashionable quarter of the town, and leading a little boy by the hand, both followed by a well-attired domestic. The child wore a light blue mantilla, of the same fashion as the lady's, closely drawn around his face; beautiful locks of light brown hair clustered upon his shoulders, and there was something very interesting in his slight and graceful figure. As my way lay in the same direction, therefore, my curiosity led me to notice them still more attentively. They stopped from time to time to look at the shops and stores; but I had no opportunity of observing the concealed face of the little boy, until the lady at length entered a jeweller's shop, leaving the child outside in the care of the servant. As I drew near, the little fellow somewhat impatiently threw off the mantilla from his head for a minute, to see the glittering trinkets; and I turned towards him to look in his face. There was no face!—it was a miniature reproduction of the hideous, formless blank which had so lately haunted me. The skin had the same scorched and bleared appearance; the features were obliterated in

the same way; and the head, upon the whole, presented a similar ghastly mass. Shuddering at the sight, I turned quickly away; less able than before to account for the horrid spectacle by any conceivable explanation.

On turning the corner of the same street, I came upon a troop of prisoners from the Accordada, chained two and two, and employed in the capacity of scavengers. I stopped for a while, noting the unwilling way in which they stooped to their labour, and speculating upon the different degrees of villany exhibited in the countenances before me. The avaricious propensities of one little man, with a keen, restless eye, and a puckered mouth, and the brutality stamped upon the coarse and repulsive features of another, had alike struck me; when an individual in the background raised his head from the earth, and turned his face in the direction I was standing. His face, do I say? No:—he, too, had neither features nor expression. His front displayed the same blighting appearance that had already shocked me. I could scarcely restrain an exclamation of horror at the sight; and after exchanging a word with the officer who guarded the prisoners, I beat a hasty retreat, endeavouring to

banish all these revolting impressions from my mind.

Subsequently meeting this official from the Accordada, I inquired the cause of such awful appearances. With an indignant look and a fierce stamp upon the ground, he assured me that the persons I had noticed were the victims of vitriol-throwers—infamous wretches who thus prosecute their schemes of vengeance and malignity! He told me the crime was a very common one in the republic, and that the most cunning contrivances were resorted to by the miscreants, to insure the utter destruction of their victims' features. Vitriol, he said, had been poured, by demons in human form, even upon the faces of sleeping children; and the countenances of vigorous men and beautiful women had been actually burned away by its repeated application: wretches had thus wreaked their malice upon those whom they considered enemies.

A most heinous case of this description he related, as having himself witnessed its results. It is almost too horrible for recollection; but I must not shrink from alluding to what is unhappily too characteristic of the lowest classes of the Mexican community.

A gentleman named Commaña had admitted a poor Mestizo into his household in the capacity of servant; and had treated him with infinitely more indulgence and consideration than usually falls to the lot of domestics in this country. By-and-bye, however, he found that the Mestizo was in the habit of stealing in and out of the house from time to time; and it was at last discovered that he had taken many portable articles of value with him. He was arrested on suspicion; tried upon several charges, which were proved against him; and imprisoned for many months in the Accordada.

He occupied himself during his long incarceration, in scheming to revenge himself upon his prosecutor; and being a most malignant and determined villain, he resolved to employ the most dreadful means of vengeance at his command.

On his liberation, he joined a crew of miscreants but lately released from prison, who frequented a dirty street in one of the worst quarters of the town, and arranged with them to rob the mansion of his late master—for profit; and to use vitriol in disfiguring the inmates—for revenge. They, therefore, procured

every requisite for their purposes, and fixed upon a time when it was known that Señor Commaña himself would be absent, for the execution of their plan.

The family retiring somewhat earlier to rest, in the absence of their head, the ruffians effected their entrance about midnight. A female domestic, who slept in a small room adjoining that of her mistress, happened to be awake at the time, and hearing a noise, rushed out; but was seized and silenced by the robbers ere she could give the alarm. They then proceeded to the sleeping apartments of the lady and her children; gagged the mother immediately on her awaking, and poured the vitriol copiously over her face and neck! So extreme was the pain that even the gag was insufficient to stifle her cries of agony. All the children were pinioned and dealt with in the same manner; and then the house was ransacked of everything valuable. The servants were intimidated in the mean time; and eventually the ruffians got safely away with their booty. The wretched mother suffered in such a degree from the pain and terror she had undergone, that she became insane; each of the children was permanently disfigured, and the youngest

child—the favourite of the heart-stricken father—was completely blinded, by the burning liquid finding its way into his eyes.

"I have the satisfaction, however, of saying," added the officer, "that this gang of infamous wretches was apprehended, in a great degree through my instrumentality; and that they were summarily executed for their crimes. I wish something could be done to put an end to such fiendish atrocities: but at present the number of persons, throughout the country, charged with using vitriol in many dreadful ways, is very great."

CHAPTER XX.

ANECDOTES OF GENERAL SANTA ANNA.

His power and popularity as President of the Republic.—His characteristics and conduct.—His capabilities as a general.—Insurrections against his government.—Anecdote of his perfidy.—His fall and banishment.—An Indian beggar's adventure.—Indian superstition.—Visit of the President to the Academy of Fine Arts.—A lucky accident.

THE qualities which aided Santa Anna in attaining the dignity of President of the Mexican Republic, and not only maintaining but increasing his power (being elected in 1833, he originated a new political organisation in 1843), and preserving popularity during a turbulent period of thirteen years, afford a subject for interesting speculation.

As the Mexicans, notwithstanding their irritability and braggadocio, have never made good soldiers, the military abilities of Santa

Anna were conspicuous, and appear to have first drawn public attention to himself. 'Great decision of character, courage and energy in action, together with unfailing perseverance, and an unscrupulousness amounting to total want of principle, which admitted of no obstacles, seem to have been his chief characteristics. In the difficulties and dilemmas in which he was continually placed while in power, he hesitated not to employ the basest treachery and artifice, as well as the utmost intimidation and cruelty, to gain his ends and preserve his ascendancy. No dependence could be placed upon his promises, no faith could be put in his treaties; arguments were unavailing to deter him from his purposes, and no mercy could be expected by his vanquished enemies. Yet the duration of his popularity proves him to have been a man eminently adapted to the country and the period; nor is it likely that a governor of milder temperament would have been able to restrain the violence of factions and insurrections with a tithe of his success.

Santa Anna's capabilities as a general were often severely tested, and the result inspired his partisans and the nation at large with the

utmost confidence in his skill and bravery. Almost immediately after his election, in 1833, a rebellion was originated by disaffected members of the church and army, at Guanajuato, but after some skirmishing and the summary execution of ringleaders, it was quelled with little loss of time. In the insurrection headed by Mexia a few years afterwards, though his opponent commanded a large army, Santa Anna de feated him with great loss, took him prisoner, and ordered him to be shot instantly.

During the presidency of Bustamente, when a civil war was raging, and the city of Mexico itself was bombarded, Santa Anna took the lead, the insurgents placed their whole dependence upon him, victory followed his standard, and the war ended with his re-elevation to the presidential chair. And in the war with the United States in 1846, it was far more on account of the weakness of the Mexican soldiery,—especially of the cavalry—compared with the horses and men of the United States, than of any deficiencies of generalship, that the contest terminated in favour of the Americans.

The energetic measures to which he had recourse to suppress the depredations of innumer-

able hordes of ladrones and smugglers, were characteristic of his energy and determination. These wretches had, before his presidency, carried on their nefarious proceedings with the utmost daring and with perfect impunity, insomuch that it was impossible either to travel or transmit goods with safety. Santa Anna, however, vigorously put in force the existing laws against them, and created others; they were hunted from district to district, great numbers were taken prisoners, and some were garotted —strangled in the Mexican fashion—from week to week, till the various bands were, for a time, either broken up or intimidated.

An anecdote related to me by a distinguished relative of the merchant mentioned in it, may serve as an instance of the treachery and dissimulation of Santa Anna.

In one of the last years of Santa Anna's power, an English merchant and traveller, about to quit Mexico, having some very valuable goods in his possession, and being aware of the unsettled state of the country, desired a private audience of the President, in order to solicit his advice and protection. An interview was granted, and the merchant had, as he thought, the good fortune to communicate

his position and wishes to the president in confidence—no one being present but Santa Anna and his secretary. The president received him most graciously, and condescended to caution him emphatically against making his journey known, or communicating to any one the secret of his wealth; further advising him to secure his treasure in secret boxes, and proposing to provide him, as an English merchant whom he highly respected, with an escort of his own trusty soldiers.

The escort was duly provided, and the English merchant soon began his journey. He had not proceeded far, however, before his guards fled, at sight of a band of heavily-armed men with blackened faces, who seized upon his goods, quickly discovering the secret boxes and slides, despoiled him of all his treasure, and decamped. The plundered merchant complained to the President of the treatment he had received, and many protestations of indignation and sympathy were made in reply; nevertheless, he had shortly ample reason to believe that the whole affair had been covertly planned by President Santa Anna himself: that the robbery had been executed under his private orders, and that the proceeds

had been devoted to the enrichment of the President's treasury

Although, since the war with the United States, Santa Anna has been disgraced and banished,—the people of Mexico becoming at length wearied of his rule, and disgusted with his unscrupulous character,—a political faction in the capital remained, until very recently, faithfully devoted to his interests, and hopeful of his return to power.

The following anecdotes belong to the time when, in spite of the outbreaks he had to quell, and the financial embarrassments with which he had to grapple, he devoted some portion of his time to the cultivation of the arts of peace, and, among other institutions, visited and fostered the Academy of Fine Arts.

A remarkably tall and fine-looking Indian, from a distant province, had made his way to the city; and, after loitering for a time about the streets in great destitution, had enlisted into the army,—where his superior appearance and steady habits were the means of his promotion through several ranks, until at length he was placed in the select body-guard of the General. It happened that a vagabond brother had borne this Indian company on his journey

from his native place, the relatives intending, on their arrival in the city, to share the good or ill fortune either might encounter, with the other. The different dispositions of the brothers, however, quickly shewed themselves in their new sphere; the elder striving, though for some time ineffectually, to improve his position, and the other finding his level almost immediately among the vilest and most dissipated of the poor population—which proceeding very soon caused a division between them. For some time they had lost sight of one another; but the younger at length became aware of the advancement in the fortunes of the other—soon calling upon him in the utmost distress, and finding relief—and though his habits were unreformed, and his circumstances were in the same deplorable state, he continued to present himself before his elder brother from time to time, and to levy an incessant tax upon him.

This worthless scapegrace would particularly visit the soldier in the morning before duty called him abroad; in the evening when his avocations for the day were performed; and even at the fonda which he used to frequent for his meals. His regards would become

pointed and affectionate also on pay-days, holidays, and gala occasions, when stray small coins were apt to jingle, and there were, figuratively speaking, more crumbs than usual falling from his brother's table. He even hung himself upon him at the most unseasonable times; would accost him when on special duty, and follow him into places where a vagabond Indian had not the smallest right to appear. On one unlucky occasion, therefore, he beheld the soldier enter a large public building with several of his companions; and he followed him forthwith. The building they had entered was the Academy of Fine Arts; and the soldiers were in immediate attendance upon General Santa Anna himself. Utterly unaware of the nature of the building, and only having noticed his brother in the crowd, the Indian cautiously approached the entrance; and finding no one to oppose his progress—for the officials of the place were fully occupied in receiving the General in an inner apartment—he marched boldly through the portal, as a matter of course.

I must here observe that many Indians in remote districts in Mexico have, to this day, a great respect for the ancient Aztec religion;

and for the gods they were in the habit of worshipping before the arrival of the Spaniards. Notwithstanding the prevailing Catholic creed of the country, a preference still prevails in such regions for their former superstitions, and the priestly missionaries have much to do to eradicate the inclination. The vagrant Indian who had just entered the building of the academy, was subject to these influences in a very high degree.

So soon as he had arrived unperceived within one of the apartments devoted to sculpture, therefore, and cast his eyes upon the statues round the walls, the ruined figures of his ancient gods presented themselves to his imagination. He stood for a time speechless and entranced: the scene was so unexpectedly striking to his fancy, that his breathing seemed suspended, and he tottered on the floor. He knew not what to think, as he beheld such images stored within a handsome apartment in the capital, after this fashion. He was inclined to fall down and worship them, when an idea entered his mind that they were kept there in mockery and degradation. He thought he had made the discovery that they were held in durance vile, for the purpose

of casting ridicule upon them and upon his people! His Indian indignation arose at the fancied insult; his eyes rolled, his lip trembled, and his fingers quivered. Perceiving a white figure, in the direction of his left hand, adorned with a bull's head upon its shoulders, and a paper inscription on its breast, and another figure, half man half horse, with another paper on its breast—his wrath became so ungovernable, that he seized a footstool standing in the apartment, and began laying about him right and left most zealously, to put an end to the desecration. Already were the figures of the centaur and taurus dashed into fragments, and marks of his vengeance imprinted on the rest; when a group of soldiers and attendants, alarmed by the noise, rushed into the room, closely followed by a dark, restless-looking gentleman with a wooden leg, an upright figure, and fierce eyes.

The last comer was General Santa Anna; and before his attendants had time to recover from their shock of horror, he had himself advanced in a towering passion to the wretched Indian, thrown him down upon the floor, and held him there with his own hands till the

soldiers had bound him fast. Then his voice was heard loudly commanding them to march the delinquent to the Accordada without delay.

I could never ascertain what became of the unfortunate rascal subsequently: some were of opinion that he had been shot by the instant orders of Santa Anna, while others expressed their conviction that he was only banished to a distant mine; it is evident, however, that he was never heard of in the city of Mexico afterwards.

But a few months succeeding the above-named occurrence, there was to be a grand inspection of the Academy by the President and his staff. The place was to be arranged in the best order for the occasion; the pictures and statues were to be cleaned, the apartments decorated, and the recent works of the few pupils and their masters were to be fully exhibited.

Great exertions were made, therefore, to array the institution in its best guise for the event. Every room was thrown into confusion; and statues, which had formerly been regarded with the utmost reverence, were huddled closely together in dark corners for the time being. Paint, water, and the juice of the ammolé, or

Mexican soap-plant, became the order of the day; and as the time set apart for the intended honour approached, the building was in such exquisite order and bloom, that the hearts of the directors rejoiced within them; and they thought they could perceive the dawning glimmer of a bright day in store for their favourite arts and beloved institution.

No soul exulted with more sincere delight on the occasion than did that of poor little Nicolo de Neñares—one of the humbler assistants and custodians of the place. He had toiled early and late in carrying out the necessary improvements; and so earnest was his habit of mind, that to the very last day he had discovered something new to be done, and had done it accordingly.

When the important morning arrived, the little Nicolo was at the Academy, and in the room especially under his charge, at an unusually early hour; and still was he dusting the favoured articles, and re-arranging them. Alas! he had just placed a particular statue in what he considered the correct light, and was turning away in exultation at the effect of his labours, when the sleeve of his jaceti unfortunately caught the extended arm of a

plaster female figure: it fell immediately, face downwards, the Grecian nose was broken off, and rolled upon the floor.

This was a dire event for poor Nicolo! The figure being a prominent one, and well known to the frequenters of the establishment, concealment was quite out of the question; and what to do on the emergency the little man did not know: it was a warm morning, and as he cogitated on the subject, in an agony of apprehension, the perspiration stood in beads upon his forehead. Presently a bright thought entered his head; and, with an exclamation of relief, he proceeded to act upon it: in his heat and earnestness he stripped off his jaceti and sash, placed them hurriedly in a recess at the other end of the apartment, and rushed to a packet of fine plaster kept in a private drawer: he mixed a small quantity of the powder with water and other ingredients, and with its aid commenced an attempt to "re-set" the nose to its proper countenance, without more ado.

He could not adjust the wilful feature to his liking, however, for a considerable time: the plaster was at first too dry, and set fast too quickly; then he made it too liquid, and it would not adhere. At last, when he had suc-

ceeded in making it secure, he discovered that it was placed a little on one side, and he had to take it off again. Time sped quickly on while the little official was at work; but so intensely was he absorbed in the affair that he did not perceive it: there he stood polishing and scraping at the nose, dressed only in his white under linen and pantaloons; and still the time passed on. At length he thought the reparation appeared satisfactory, and was just wiping away the last indications of the plaster with a napkin, when he was startled by the sound of several voices close behind him in the apartment.

To his astonishment and dismay, he saw that he was overlooked by the President himself, and a select body of guards and officials—all dressed in their richest state uniforms, and standing at but a short distance behind. All eyes were turned upon him; and as Santa Anna made some remark in a low tone to an attendant at his right hand, poor Nicolo observed a perceptible dark shade upon his countenance. He gazed first at the splendid uniforms of the President and his staff, and the elaborate attire of the other officials; then down upon his own prominent pantaloons and

exposed under-linen—and almost sank into the earth with confusion. He felt, indeed, that he "had not on the wedding garment!"

The unfortunate Nicolo de Neñares bowed his head with a comical expression of bewildered astonishment—for he had not power to speak—and slunk to the side of the room as soon as possible. He felt himself the object to which all eyes were directed, and the consciousness was so overwhelming that it deprived him of the power of thought; and he remained in his paucity of costume, utterly helpless, and all but swooning with emotion. At length, an attendant at the other end of the room charitably threw his jaceti and sash towards him, which had the effect of rousing him to dress himself with the utmost despatch, and beat a hasty and undignified retreat from the scene.

Unlucky as this circumstance appeared at the time for the poor official, it was yet the means of his advancement in a higher degree than he had ever dreamed of. The attention of Santa Anna was drawn towards him; and after the first singular impression of the scene had worn away, he was disposed to regard the affair in a humorous light. He inquired as to

the character and abilities of Señor Nicolo de Neñares; and on learning that he was both active, clever, and intelligent, he elevated him to the dignity of his private secretary.

CHAPTER XXI.

OUTBREAKS DURING THE WAR.

The war in Mexico.—Fondness for political changes.—Treatment of prisoners by the Mexicans.—Priestly exertions.—Generosity of the Americans.—The cumanche and the priest.—An execution.—A holy father's attempted revenge.

It is not to be denied that the first hostilities between Mexico and the United States were characterized by many revolting cruelties and uncalled-for atrocities—perpetrated for the most part by the soldiers and armed cumanches of the former country.

Not to enter into any discussion as to the chief causes of quarrel, it is yet evident that the Mexicans had given their thin-skinned neighbours foundations for complaint. The most haughty and sneering refusals had been tendered to them when accommodations were proposed, and settlement of acknowledged dues demanded. A distasteful assumption of im-

portance and superiority had been betrayed by the semi-Spaniards, on occasions when almost any other line of conduct ought to have been followed. The restless jealousy of their spirit, which has so frequently given rise to rebellions and pronunciamientos among themselves, was undisguisedly manifested; and it only needed such a question as the annexation of Texas, to blow the embers of animosity into a fierce blaze, and to draw upon themselves (though the Texians strongly inclined to the new arrangement), the visitation and consequences of war.

A more detailed account is given in another chapter, of the fondness of the Mexican people for political changes, and declarations of war and independence. Suffice it to say, that on this occasion they rushed into hostilities with their usual precipitancy, confident of easy victory on account of their multitude: though the number of their armies is always much exaggerated.

They were also prepared, as the event proved, to bring cruelty itself—such barbarism as could only have been expected from the most savage nations—to aid them in their demonstrations of enmity against their adversaries.

Fastening upon a number of prisoners, some

Texians and some Americans, they marshalled them in the most summary manner for the decision of their officers; ordered them out without the formality of a trial, and shot every individual of them, without mercy or delay.

Capturing other parties of Americans, part of whom were women—camp-followers and soldiers' wives—they fell upon them in indiscriminate revenge, and ruthlessly cut their throats; sparing none: their dead bodies, weltering in their blood, were afterwards discovered by their friends.

They hung and cut to pieces several Mexicans and Texians, whose only crime consisted in acting as compulsory guides to the hostile army; and left their mutilated remains exposed in conspicuous places as warnings to others.

It was their practice to extort, by the most brutal threats and unlicensed conduct, the money and property of individuals unfortunate enough to be in their vicinity; or, failing this, to outrage their families, or sacrifice a portion of them to their mean revenge. They exhibited the utmost baseness and duplicity in case of attempts at compromise, or interchange of prisoners, in relation to small parties who had

been betrayed into their hands. And they stripped and plundered the bodies of the American dead, left on the field of battle; bruising and mutilating them in the most brutish and vindictive manner.

It is consoling to know, however, that in course of time such barbarities became fewer and further between; until at length they ceased altogether, and hostilities were conducted a little more in accordance with the dictates of humanity. As the Americans approached the capital—though strenuous exertions to the contrary were made by priests and others—their advent was regarded, by the more intelligent inhabitants, rather as a token of forthcoming tranquillity than otherwise.

Such proceedings as the foregoing gave rise to reprisals on the part of the Americans: a number of the vile cumanches and rancheros—who had been foremost in several of the atrocities last named—were elevated to the dignity of high gallows-trees: others were shot, taken in the act. The Mexican officers were indignantly expostulated with and threatened on the subject; and prompt and vigorous measures were resorted to, until at length the taste for such horrors was forcibly subdued.

The subsequent generosity of the American general shines in happy contrast with these deeds. A large party of wounded Mexicans was left in the hospital, totally unprovided for, on the retreat of Santa Anna's army from Buena Vista. In this dreadful retreat hundreds of the wounded were left by the way-side, helpless and suffering, to be devoured piecemeal by wolves, even before their death; and numbers who had escaped unscathed from the fight, perished on their march, in the agonies of thirst and hunger. On General Taylor becoming acquainted with the fact, he despatched such medical assistance as he could spare, together with between thirty and forty mules laden with provisions, to their assistance. This is only a single instance, out of many that might be recorded, to the credit of the Americans at this period.

There was one villanous cumanche named Bacho, who had signalized himself on several occasions—leading on a troop of his associates to plunder and maltreat the dead on the field of battle; sharing the hateful spoil among his followers, after appropriating the largest portion to himself; and spending his ill-gotten gains in the most unrestrained debauchery. Many

individuals of the present race of priests in Mexico, as I have elsewhere observed, are descended from the lowest grades of the populace, and have relatives and connections among them: for the original Spanish ecclesiastics are no longer to be found. This Bacho, as it happened, was the brother of a priest; and although the avocations of the two men were so different—the priest being occupied in caring for the welfare of the Church, in which was included his own, and the cumanche in herding with a troop of wretches as vile as himself, for the worst purposes—there was yet a great resemblance between the brothers. They had the same avaricious spirit, mean cunning, and revengeful passions; and each, most probably, would have acted in a precisely similar way had he been in the situation of the other.

Bacho was a most repulsive wretch in appearance; low in stature, like most Mexicans, he cowered and stooped in his gait continually, like a wild beast creeping to his lair. His eyes were quick, yet downcast; his face broad, yet sunken, protruding and retreating like that of a dog; his limbs were gaunt and sharp, the bones appearing ready to pierce the skin; and his hide was so shrivelled and darkened that

his resemblance to one of the lower animals seemed, on the whole, complete. This creature during an engagement would keep the utmost distance, but seemed to riot with the wolves and vultures over the field of battle afterwards; preying on and plundering the bodies of both friends and foes after death.

Several efforts had been made by the Americans to capture this notorious rascal and his comrades; who were the means of exciting the most vindictive feelings in the invading camp against the Mexicans generally. At length the soldiers on both sides endeavoured to apprehend them as common enemies: hitherto they had attempted it without success.

One dark night—shortly after the army of General Scott had taken possession of Vera Cruz—the priest above mentioned had been called, in the exercise of his vocation, towards the western outskirts of the town. He had set out in his carriage, accompanied by his attendants, and was returning at a late hour in the same direction, when he was alarmed by the sight of a fire and several torches on the road before him. He despatched several of his attendants in a stealthy manner, to learn the cause of the lights and tumult, straining his eyes

meanwhile through the darkness to discover whether any immediate danger threatened himself.

"Señora di Dios! Amor de la Virgen! What has happened?" was his inquiry on the return of his domestics.

"It is merely some Mestizoes and Indians, father," they replied, "who are rejoicing over the reward received for the apprehension of some murdering cumanches."

The priest ordered his carriage to proceed, in high disdain of such an interruption; and soon it arrived under the trees close to the crowd. At this moment, however, the father's mind underwent an unaccountable change; and, agitated by an irrepressible feeling of curiosity, he once more gave the word for the vehicle to halt, that he might behold the scene in person. Dismounting, therefore, he approached the trees where the fire and torches were, and mixed among the crowd, with his cowl drawn closely round his face that he might not be known.

What was his horror to discover almost immediately before him six dead bodies hanging on six of the trees, in a line with each other! The glare of the lights just then came upon

the corpses with a fitful lustre, lending an increased ghastliness to each figure as it swayed backwards and forwards in the breeze. The priest covered both his eyes with his hands, and turned in disgust from the sight: but a word from one of the bystanders thrilled his soul with even a redoubled horror.

"Bacho is caught at last!" exclaimed a voice in the crowd.

"Oh! that villain Bacho!" repeated another.

"Look how he swings!" humorously shouted a third.

The priest rushed wildly to the foot of the tree indicated, and gazed on the features of the corpse upon it. The lineaments of the face were distorted; but as the light shone brightly, he saw it was unquestionably the face of his brother, the cumanche! With a low growl—not of grief, but of rage—he hastily retreated to his carriage; and, with loud imprecations, commanded his attendants to convey him swiftly home.

He had never cared for his brother: he had, on the contrary, hated, despised, and disowned him. But the thought that any connection of his had been executed in such a summary manner by the orders of the Ameri-

cans—this was too much! The idea filled his soul with the most overwhelming rage: it maddened him to the degree that he actually foamed and gurgled at the mouth; and as soon as he could subdue his passion sufficiently to think, his whole reflections were bent upon the accomplishment of a dire revenge.

He first set about ascertaining under whose direction the executions had taken place; and he learned by many inquiries that a certain Captain Barton had been the principal agent in apprehending the delinquents, and that it was under his superintendence the order for their punishment was carried into effect.

His next step was to discover if Captain Barton were at that time stationed in Vera Cruz; and he succeeded in finding that the Captain was quartered, together with a few officers of his mess, at the house of a mercer called Xelin, standing by itself in the north-west district of the town. He then made it his business to sound the mercer as to the likelihood of his participating in the scheme of revenge. Xelin was very timid and meek, for a Mexican, and would apparently be the last person in the world to embark in anything bloody or dangerous; but the father resolved to bully him into acqui-

escence. All the forces of the priest's persuasions and commands were brought to bear upon him: denunciations of his apathetic spiritual state were thundered into his ears; the threats which a vile priesthood are so well accustomed to keep at their command were produced on the occasion; so that the little draper was at length constrained to enter into the holy father's plans with all the soul he had—and it was not much—lest that soul should burn and suffer in the fires of purgatory for too long a term. Ave Maria! And soon the reverend priest, with his submissive slave, began with all energy to arrange the plan for their murderous retaliation.

The monk first purchased the most valuable articles from the mercer's store—not a very extensive one—and had them conveyed away; then they privately removed a number of inferior goods from a small room adjoining the store, under the principal apartment of the house, which was on the second story: the little room in question had no external communication with the rear of the premises, so they would not be interrupted. The mercer then procured a quantity of sulphur, ostensibly for the purpose of dyeing draperies; and the priest

furnished a pile of fine charcoal from the burner's, and also a stock of saltpetre, with a little gunpowder—not much, for that would have looked suspicious. With fingers trembling with delight, he mixed the inflammatory materials all together, neglecting no ingredient which would insure the destructive quality he so ardently desired. They placed the dried mixture in one formidable heap upon a table beneath the floor of the upper-room, laying a wide train communicating with the table, and strewing the floor of the small apartment in the same manner. After surveying their work—the father with hideous satisfaction, and the mercer with fear and trembling—they secured the door most carefully, and barred up the window; only waiting for the identical evening which was to reward them for their labours.

And now the time had come. It was quite dark and cloudy withal, and the hour when Captain Barton and the officers of his company were in the habit of assembling for the night. Every preparation had been made, the door behind which was the train of gunpowder, was partially open; the priest and his associate were on the ground opposite, the former having something carefully concealed under his vest-

ments. They waited in breathless suspense, for at present all was gloom in the fated apartment. Half an hour elapsed;—all was darkness yet. Another quarter of an hour passed on;—and still there was no light. The holy father's indignation was aroused against his companion, because his heart beat so strongly, and his breath came so short and painfully, that he prevented his reverence hearing. But soon there came a light, and a merry voice singing, followed by a shout of laughter. They had evidently assembled.

"Lay a thick train from the doorway across the court-yard," exclaimed the priest. "But stay, I will do it myself, effectually."

The hitherto concealed light was carefully produced; the priest stooped down and applied it to the powder; a rush of air was instantaneously felt. The fire leaped wildly to the door—to the table—to the room; and with a hiss—a blinding flame—a thundering crash—the house was blown to fragments, and all within it and around it was a heap of blackened, smoking ruin!

Impotent atrocity! Futile revenge! The two miscreants were too busy with their own machinations, to perceive that, some

moments before they were ready to ignite the train, the light and voice had departed from the room—and when they fired it, there was no one there! For the captain and his brother officers were unavoidably detained for the night in attendance upon the General; and the captain had only despatched his attendant—a fellow who had the habit of singing and laughing to himself—for his muster-roll, which he had forgotten.

The worthy father and sapient Xelin, therefore, expended their rage and imbecility upon vacant walls and empty apartments. And soon they had to run for their lives, for the neighbourhood and soldiers being aroused, the place became too hot for them!

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